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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE  
EDUCATIONAL UNIT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA PRIOR TO 1947,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE INTRODUCTORY PHASE,  
1933 - 1937

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Historical  
Development of the Large Administrative Educational  
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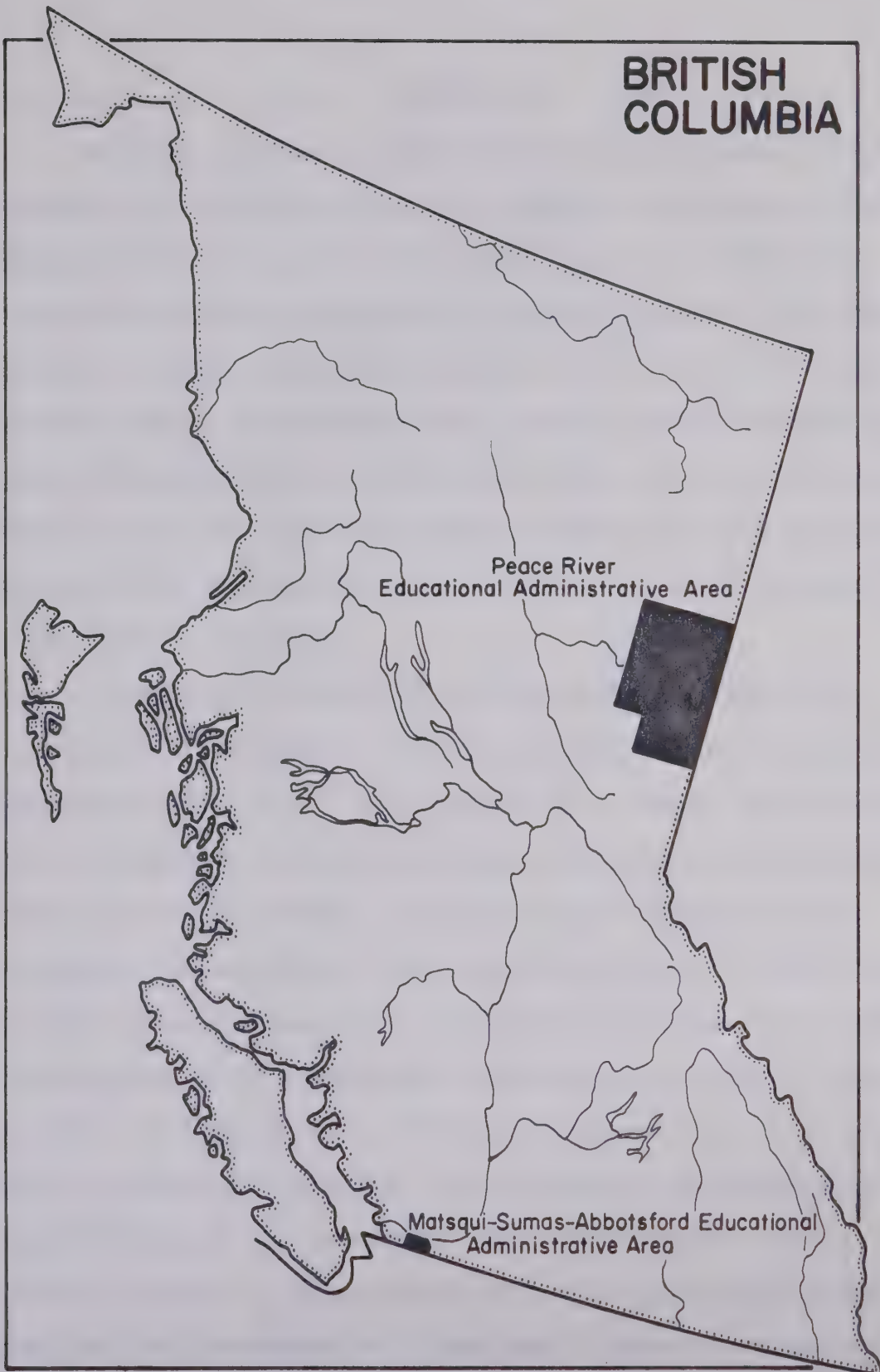




# BRITISH COLUMBIA

Peace River  
Educational Administrative Area

Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Educational  
Administrative Area









## ABSTRACT

Within the rural municipalities established in British Columbia by 1906 were over one hundred school districts, each controlled by an elected school board. After the creation of rural municipality school districts, all the schools within a municipality came under the control of a central board. Although these districts were similar to large administrative educational units, their establishment was not part of a definite movement and the government made no serious effort to reduce the great number of rural school districts.

In the early years of the Great Depression the Department of Education and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (B.C.T.F.), influenced by a desire to economize and by attempts to organize large units in Alberta, advocated the establishment of large units throughout the province. George Weir, who became Minister of Education in 1933, also favored the large unit scheme and persuaded the government to establish a commission on school finance. In 1935 the commission's technical advisor, H. B. King, and its revision committee issued reports recommending the organization of the province into large units. King favored control by government officials, and the assumption by the government of "complete financial responsibility for education." In 1936 legislation was passed permitting large districts to become "educational







administrative areas" under centralized control.

Conditions in the Peace River District of British Columbia in 1933 rendered the settlers incapable of either supporting or managing their schools. To bring about greater economy, efficiency, and harmony, and to provide a demonstration area for the rest of the province, the government in 1934 and 1935 made most of the District a single unit under a government-appointed official trustee. The strong initial opposition of many Peace River residents to the change is revealed in letters to the government and the local paper, a petition to the government, and the threat in one region of a school "strike." However, when a vote was held in 1937, a majority favored the large unit.

In 1935 the municipalities of Matsqui and Sumas in the Lower Fraser Valley asked for government financial assistance. As it wished to establish a large unit in a more typical region than the Peace River, the government enlarged the Abbotsford District to include Matsqui and Sumas, and appointed an official trustee. Locally, there was very little opposition to and considerable support for the change.

Although advisory committees in both large units requested a measure of control over education, and the Matsqui ratepayers asked for improved financial arrangements, the government made no changes between 1936 and







1944. The B.C.T.F. accused the government of economizing in the large units at the expense of teachers' welfare.

In 1944 the government appointed Maxwell A. Cameron to enquire into educational finance. He recommended large units under elected school boards, and payment by the government of approximately half of all school costs. The government implemented the Cameron Report in 1946, thus ending Weir's "experiment in socialized control."







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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Archives

- ABCTF — Archives of British Columbia Teachers'  
Federation, Vancouver, British Columbia
- ASPRSD — Archives of South Peace River School  
District, School Board Office, Dawson  
Creek, British Columbia
- PABC — Provincial Archives of British Columbia,  
Victoria, British Columbia

### Other Abbreviations

- B.C.T.F. — British Columbia Teachers' Federation
- B.C.S.T.A.— British Columbia School Trustees'  
Association
- C.C.F. — Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
- M.S.A. — Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford







## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to examine the development of the large administrative educational unit in British Columbia from 1906 to 1946, with particular emphasis upon proposals for large units from 1933 to 1937, the introductory phases of the Peace River and Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford (M.S.A.) pilot projects, and the reactions of the public and the government to the proposals and changes.

#### Statement of Sub-Problems

The study has two sub-problems:

1. To examine the administrative changes in the control of education which took place in the pilot projects and which were advocated in proposals for large units in British Columbia between 1906 and 1946.
2. To examine the inter-relationships between the administrative changes and the methods of financing education.

#### Delimitations of the Study

This study deals mainly with attempts to establish large administrative educational units in British Columbia under centralized control between 1933 and 1946. Because of







the limited information available on the M.S.A. District, and because it was a more typical region of British Columbia, it is not considered as intensively as the Peace River District. Attention is focused upon the reaction to the large unit of: (1) the provincial government, (2) the Department of Education, (3) official trustees, (4) the British Columbia School Trustees Association (B.C.S.T.A.), (5) the people of the Peace River District, (6) the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (B.C.T.F.), and (7) the teachers in the Peace River and M.S.A. Districts.

This study is concerned with the period before 1933 to provide necessary background for an understanding of the later period. Little attention is paid to the details of implementing the Cameron Report in 1946. No attempt is made to trace the origin of the concept of the large administrative unit or to compare the units established in British Columbia with those in other parts of the world.

### Importance of the Study

The establishment of the large administrative educational units in Canada brought far-reaching changes in the administration of public education. Because British Columbia was one of the first provinces to form large units, its early efforts in this regard merit examination. The study is also justified because some of these attempts involved a unique form of centralized control.

The assumption widely held by British Columbia educators that the Peace River and M.S.A. Districts caused later







province-wide reorganization needs to be investigated. The relationship between the little-known King Report and later changes also requires study.

### Review of Related Literature

There are brief references to the formation of large administrative units in British Columbia in the histories of Canadian education by Phillips,<sup>1</sup> Johnson,<sup>2</sup> and Wilson, Stamp, and Audet.<sup>3</sup> Johnson's history of education in British Columbia has<sup>4</sup> three relevant chapters: "Control and Local Authorities, 1872 to 1924," "Depression and Problems of Finance and Administration," and "The Cameron Report and School District Organization." English made<sup>5</sup> a thorough assessment of the results of implementing the Cameron Report in 1946 and "suggested"<sup>6</sup> five reasons why the Peace River and M.S.A. plans were not adopted in the rest of the province:

- a. they were not "outstandingly well suited" to meet the varying conditions throughout the province;
- b. the government in the Thirties showed "little inclination . . . to play a leading role in bringing the question of school finance and district reorganization to a head";
- c. there was a reliance upon local initiative;
- d. the public feared losing local control;
- e. the plans did not solve financial problems.

King's history of education in British Columbia which is a part of his report,<sup>7</sup> although not documented, is excellent with regard to educational administration and finance.

As attempts to introduce the large unit in Alberta influenced the educators in British Columbia, and as some attempt







is made in this study to account for the greater success of the plan in Alberta in the 1930's, a review of studies of the large unit in Alberta is advisable. The best published source available is the history by Chalmers.<sup>8</sup> Gilles compared costs of administration before and after consolidation, and Jonason studied the adequacy of physical plants of rural schools after the formation of large units.<sup>9</sup> Gilles made<sup>10</sup> the first thorough evaluation of reorganization. Hambly made<sup>11</sup> a similar study pertaining only to secondary education. Historical studies by Goresky and Wilson tell<sup>12</sup> the story of the struggle to introduce the large unit in Alberta. Jonason, using public opinion as the main criterion of success, made<sup>13</sup> an assessment of the new divisional system. Fletcher's book on the large unit tells<sup>14</sup> of the development of the large unit in Canada and the United States to the time of writing (1939). His chapter on British Columbia criticizes centralized control, and contains two reports by William Plenderleith, a school inspector, the one on the M.S.A. District being a major reference for this study's treatment of the second large unit in British Columbia. Plenderleith's dissertation<sup>15</sup> on the formation of the Peace River Unit is also valuable for its reproduction of original documents, although it does not go beyond 1935 and is not concerned with a detailed examination of reactions to the plan. A report of the British Columbia Department of Education traces<sup>16</sup> the development of the large school unit to 1952 and summarizes the various commission reports dealt with in this study. Four chapters in a dissertation<sup>17</sup> by Smith are based largely upon this departmental report.







## Other Sources of Data

### Books

Books not dealing directly with the large unit were also consulted. Ormsby's history of British Columbia<sup>18</sup> helped relate political and economic factors to changes in the administration of education. A series of verbatim reports<sup>19</sup> of the speeches made at the B.C.S.T.A. conventions were the primary source for reactions of the trustees' association to the formation of large units.

Several books were used for the chapters describing the Peace River District in 1933. Meteorological data were taken from publications by the Department of Transport.<sup>20</sup> Bowes' book,<sup>21</sup> a collection of primary references on the Peace River, provided material on transportation problems and the district's growth. The locally prepared study by Coutts<sup>22</sup> was useful for the nature of settlement. Fortunately, two excellent studies of the Peace River District were published in the Thirties. One, by Kitto, deals<sup>23</sup> with natural resources, and the other, by Dawson, with human resources. Dawson's work, a pioneer sociological study, was particularly useful for information concerning the standard of living in the Peace River. A work<sup>24</sup> edited by Alfred H. Siemens was used for information concerning conditions in the Lower Fraser Valley.

### Theses

Four other theses were helpful: MacLaurin's for its treatment of educational finance in British Columbia prior to 1934; Sutherland's and Granthem's for the details of the







political scene in the Thirties, and Bergen's for its examination of the large unit in Manitoba.<sup>25</sup>

### Other Unpublished Materials Including Correspondence

The main sources of unpublished materials were the correspondence of the official trustee of the Peace River District (Archives of South Peace River School District), the files of the B.C.T.F. (Archives of the B.C.T.F.), and the T. D. Pattullo Papers (Provincial Archives of British Columbia). The correspondence of the official trustee, including letters to and from teachers, nurses, the Minister and the Superintendent of Education, school boards and "correspondents,"<sup>26</sup> parents and children, was an extremely valuable source for the section on community frictions and attitudes toward education and on reactions to the centralized scheme. Official letters were considered a reasonably accurate source for factual material. The B.C.T.F. files revealed the reactions and recommendations of the teachers' federation. The chief value of the Pattullo Papers was in providing the texts of speeches on education delivered by T. Dufferin Pattullo, premier from 1933 to 1941. A serious lack arises from the failure of the Department of Education to preserve its correspondence for the period under consideration.

### Annual British Columbia Public School Reports

The annual public school reports from 1872 to 1946 were a major, and for some topics, the only source available for this study. The statistical information was regarded as substantially valid. Statements of inspectors and superintendents,







particularly interpretations and conclusions, were used critically.

### British Columbia Commission Reports on Education

There were three commission reports on education in the period prior to 1946. The Putnam-Weir Report, 1925, dealt<sup>27</sup> mainly with curriculum and reorganization of schools, but also made recommendations regarding school finance, administration, and consolidation. The report's greatest value was its revelation that George Weir, Minister of Education when reorganization was attempted, was originally opposed to centralized control. The King Report,<sup>28</sup> 1935, one of this dissertation's major concerns, was studied intensively. Appendices in the report contain the revision committee's report and the sections on the earlier Harper Commission Report pertaining to education. The Cameron Report,<sup>29</sup> 1945, was used as the main source for the chapter dealing with the final adoption of large units.

### Other Government Reports

Statistics on municipal mill rates and assessments were obtained from reports<sup>30</sup> of the British Columbia Department of Municipal Affairs.

### The Statutes of British Columbia

Public Schools Acts were passed in 1872, 1891, 1905, 1922, and 1936, and numerous amendments were passed in intervening and succeeding years. Much of the information on the years before 1934 is based upon the statutes of British Columbia.







An important amending act passed in 1936 provided an administrative basis for existing and future large units. (See Appendix C.) Finally, implementation of the Cameron Report necessitated numerous amendments.

### Newspapers

Vancouver, Victoria, Dawson Creek, and Abbotsford newspapers of the Thirties were used for information on the establishment of large units, on the School Finance Commission, 1933, and on related political developments. Newspaper reports were subjected to critical examination. The Dawson Creek paper contained many letters and editorials commenting on the large unit.

### Articles and Pamphlets

Many articles on the subject of the large administrative unit in British Columbia are summaries of longer scholarly works.<sup>31</sup> There are useful articles on the Peace River District and on the King Report in The B.C. Teacher.<sup>32</sup> A pamphlet<sup>33</sup> dealing with the Peace River Unit written by English was useful, particularly for statistical information and for the development of the unit after 1935. Various pamphlets published by Departments of Education<sup>34</sup> provide a minor source of information.

### Interviews

Interviews were held with former Department of Education officials, a former member of the Legislative Assembly,<sup>35</sup> and former teachers and early settlers in the Peace River District.







The study relies on these interviews for recollections of general conditions and attitudes rather than for specific details. All information obtained in this manner was subjected to critical examination.

### Definitions of Terms Used

Consolidation. "Consolidation" will be used to mean the provision of a central school to replace two or more smaller schools. Because consolidation often resulted in a union of school districts, the term was often used in the Thirties to refer to such unions and even to those in which the smaller schools remained open. Thus officials often called the Peace River District a "consolidated district."

Control of Education. "Control of education" will be used to mean the power to enact and enforce regulations concerning: school buildings, grounds, equipment, and supplies; school district boundaries; appointment and discharge of teachers; training, licensing, and inspecting of teachers; and textbooks, curricula and examinations.

Centralized Control. "Centralized control" will be used to mean control by the provincial government of the aspects of education enumerated above.

Educational Administrative Area. "Educational Administrative Area" will be used to mean a large administrative educational unit in British Columbia under centralized control as provided for in amendments to the Public Schools Act in 1936. (See Appendix C.)







Large Administrative Educational Unit (sometimes called "larger unit" or "large district"). "Large administrative educational unit" will be used arbitrarily to mean a unit under a single administration, usually formed by uniting several school districts and employing at least thirty teachers.

Local Control. Theoretically, "local control" means control by locally elected officials of all the aspects of education enumerated above under "control of education." However, this type of control never existed and was never advocated in British Columbia. The term therefore will be used to mean local control of such aspects of education as the maintenance of school property and the appointment and discharge of teachers, but not of such matters as determination of curricula and textbooks, and training and certification of teachers.

Peace River Block. The legal description of "the Peace River Block" is:<sup>36</sup> ". . . that certain parcel or tract of land situate in the Province of British Columbia . . . which is bounded on the east by the boundary between British Columbia and Alberta;<sup>37</sup> on the north by a line drawn westerly at right angles to the said boundary line through its point of intersection by the twenty-third base line of the Dominion lands system of survey; on the south by a line drawn westerly at right angles to the said boundary line through its point of intersection by the twentieth base line of the Dominion lands system of survey; and on the west by a line parallel to the said boundary line and distant therefrom seventy-five miles thirty-eight chains and sixty-four links, the said







parcel containing three million, five hundred thousand acres." (See Appendix A.) The lands of the Block, which contained most of the settled areas of the Peace River District, were administered by the federal government between 1907 and 1930.

Peace River District. The "Peace River District" will be used to mean that area of British Columbia east of the Rocky Mountains drained by the Peace River and its tributaries. The term is confusing because the Peace River Rural School District established in 1935 did not include all of this area and because there are also a Peace River District area and a Peace River School Division in Alberta.

Peace River Rural School District. The "Peace River Rural School District" will be used to mean the school district established in 1935 which included all the populated parts of the Peace River District except Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, and Rolla, and which became the Peace River Educational Administrative Area in 1937.







## NOTES

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17. Ibid. The most relevant chapters are "A Survey of the School System of British Columbia, 1924," "Report of the Commission on Educational Finance and Administration, 1934," "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance, 1944 (sic)," and "The Development of the Large Administrative Unit in the Provincial System of Administration." In view of what has been said concerning the need for the study, Smith's conclusion concerning the King Report is of interest: "Owing to what was considered to be the drastic nature of such recommendations at that time, they were not then implemented, but nevertheless the Report provided a basis for the pattern of development that followed." Ibid., 130.
18. M. A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto, Macmillan, 1958).
19. Reports of the Proceedings of the Conventions of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, 1934, 1935, 1936, n.p., n.d.







20. Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Temperature and Precipitation Tables for British Columbia, Volume I (Toronto, n.p., 1967); Tables for Prairie Provinces, Volume III (ibid.); Climatic Summaries for Selected Meteorological Stations in Canada, Volume III (Toronto, n.p., 1965); Climatic Normals, Volume VI (Toronto, n.p., 1968).
21. G. E. Bowes, (ed.), Peace River Chronicles (Vancouver, Prescott, 1963).
22. M. E. Coutts, Dawson Creek Past and Present (Edmonton, Hambly, n.d.).
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24. A. H. Siemens, Lower Fraser Valley: Evolution of a Cultural Landscape (Vancouver, Tantalus, 1966).
25. D. L. MacLaurin, "The History of Education in the Crown Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia and in the Province of British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 1936); J. N. Sutherland, "T. D. Pattullo as a Party Leader" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1960); R. Granthem, "Some Aspects of the Socialist Movement in British Columbia, 1898-1933" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1942); J. J. Bergen, "School District Reorganization in Rural Manitoba" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 1967).
26. Following the abolition of school boards, the official trustee appointed a "correspondent" for each school to act in an advisory capacity. M. S. Morell to C. E. Tomlinson, former secretary of Crystal Spring school board, October 18, 1934. Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
27. J. H. Putnam and G. M. Weir, Survey of the School System (Victoria, King's Printer, 1925).
28. King.
29. M. A. Cameron, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945).







30. British Columbia, Department of Municipal Affairs, Report of the Deputy Minister, 1935-1943 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1936-1944).
31. The most important articles are: W. A. Plenderleith, "The Peace River Experiment," The School, Secondary Edition, volume XXV, November 1936, December 1936, and January 1937; H. B. King, "Reorganization of Education in British Columbia," Education in the Modern World, 1936, autumn series; F. T. Faurey, "The Implementation of the Cameron Report in British Columbia," Canadian Education, volume II, number 1, June 1946; J. F. K. English, "An Evaluation of the Reorganized System of Local School Administration in British Columbia," Canadian Education, volume XI, number 3, January 1956.
32. The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, numbers 2, 4-8, 10, October, December - April, and June, 1935-1936.
33. J. F. K. English, "The Peace River Educational Administrative Unit" (mimeographed, Pouce Coupe, 1942).
34. The following are examples: Alberta, Department of Education, The School Division after Three Years (Edmonton, King's Printer, 1940); "School Organization"; British Columbia, Department of Education (W. A. Plenderleith), Report of the Survey of Education in New Brunswick (Victoria, Queen's Printer, 1952).
35. The writer knows of only two M.L.A.'s in the early Thirties who are now living; Harold Winch and Dorothy Steeves. Steeves was interviewed because of her friendship with George Weir and H. B. King, and her opposition to centralized control in the Thirties.
36. Order of Council No. 450 of the British Columbia Executive Council, June 26, 1907. Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Lands, Forests, and Water Resources, Victoria, B.C.
37. The map accompanying the Order in Council showed a divergence of the eastern boundary from the 120th Meridian, which is the boundary between the two provinces. Appendix A.







## CHAPTER II

### THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT, 1906-1933

The establishment of rural municipality school districts in 1906 greatly reduced the number of districts in British Columbia. The government attempted to reduce the number further by consolidating schools. In the late Twenties, educators began to advance the theory of the large unit as a means of reorganizing school administration throughout the province. Changes were made in the financing and administration of education which influenced the later growth of the large unit.

#### 1. The British Columbia Public School System in 1906

In 1906 the central authority controlling education in British Columbia was<sup>1</sup> the Council of Public Instruction, consisting of the cabinet and the superintendent of education. There were<sup>2</sup> two hundred and fifty-seven city and rural school districts. The city districts included all incorporated cities and towns and were classified<sup>3</sup> as follows on the basis of average daily attendance:

- (a) first class - 1,000 or more,
- (b) second class - between 250 and 999,
- (c) third class - below 250.

The three classes had school boards of seven, five, and three elected trustees respectively. A rural area served by a school with twenty or more pupils in attendance between the ages of







six and sixteen qualified<sup>4</sup> as a rural school district. Schools with ten to nineteen pupils were called<sup>5</sup> "assisted schools." Rural and assisted schools were each managed<sup>6</sup> by a board of three elected trustees.

The city school districts were financed<sup>7</sup> by local taxation and per pupil government grants of \$13.00, \$15.00 and \$17.00 to first, second, and third class cities respectively. This grant system caused<sup>8</sup> economy-minded city boards to increase class size. The division of cities into classes was only partially successful in equalizing the financial burden as there were "communities with plenty of children and comparatively little wealth."<sup>9</sup> Another criticism made of the grant system was that it was too generous. Superintendent of Education, Alexander Robinson said<sup>10</sup> that the government was paying 90 per cent of Cumberland's school costs. Furthermore, he continued, Cumberland's two mill tax rate was considerably lower than that paid in eastern Canadian cities. The government paid<sup>11</sup> all school expenses in rural school districts, and paid the teacher's salary and a small grant for incidental expenses in assisted schools. Robinson considered<sup>12</sup> it "unfair" that the newer assisted schools had to be built at local expense while "such prosperous settlements" as Chilliwack, Ladner, Comox, Armstrong, and Kelowna, none of which were cities, had the cost "of every cord of wood" and "every box of chalk" provided by the government. He declared that ". . . the time [had come] . . . openly and courageously" to revise the Public Schools Act. The government paid<sup>13</sup> approximately 62 per cent of the cost of education in 1906.







All school boards had the power to appoint and dismiss teachers and to manage school buildings and grounds. Inspectors of schools often criticized boards for the manner in which they exercised this power. A. C. Stewart described<sup>14</sup> the selection of teachers in many districts as "a mere lottery" and the dismissal as the outcome of "jealousy and prejudice."

Why the teacher is dismissed is most frequently far removed from even the semblance of just cause. . . . Too often it is the result of local faction fights . . . but oftener from an unworthy desire on the part of too many of the residents of the section to have the handling of that portion of the teacher's salary which he is obliged to part with for the privilege of eating and sleeping in the district.

In rural areas it was often difficult to keep schools clean, as no money was provided for janitorial services. Often a teacher was dismissed<sup>15</sup> because he failed to do this work himself.

Little direct relationship between local financial responsibility and local control is evident in British Columbia's school system in 1906. Although a great variation of financial responsibility in the districts existed, all boards enjoyed<sup>16</sup> similar powers. Nor did the evolution of the system prior to 1906 support the common assumption that concessions to local control follow devolution of financial support. Although in 1879, local districts were paying nothing toward the cost of education, they had<sup>17</sup> virtually as much control over teachers and school property as in 1906. Concessions to local control were probably made mainly to save money. Centralized maintenance of schools and control over teacher contracts would have required a large inspectorial







staff. Harold Campbell, a school inspector in the Twenties, has described<sup>18</sup> one-room school districts as a "nuisance." The government probably considered the external aspects of education generally as a nuisance and therefore relegated their control to local authorities. Political considerations also had an effect. Many residents, having come from the United States and eastern Canada, were accustomed to a measure of local control over schools.

## 2. Educational Changes in 1906

### Rural Municipality School Districts

By 1906 twenty-one rural municipalities had been organized<sup>19</sup> in British Columbia, fourteen in the Lower Mainland, four on Vancouver Island, and three in the Okanagan and Shuswap Valleys. (See Table I.) Although these districts were governed by municipal councils, they contained<sup>20</sup> one hundred and twenty-seven rural school districts each under its own school board. With the creation<sup>21</sup> of rural municipality school districts, all of the schools in a rural municipality came under the jurisdiction of a five-man school board. School inspectors praised the new system. David Wilson stated<sup>22</sup> that it was "a very long step in advance of anything yet attempted in this Province for the improvements of Rural Schools" and hoped that it "might be applied to regions without municipal government." A.C. Stewart described<sup>23</sup> the problem of rural schools as "the most persistent and important question" in education, and







TABLE I

RURAL MUNICIPALITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 1906<sup>★</sup>

	Number of Schools	Number of Divisions <sup>1</sup>	Enrolment
Burnaby	4	5	241
Chilliwack	11	17	615
Coquitlam	3	4	137
Cowichan North	7	8	237
Delta	8	11	376
Kent	2	2	89
Langley	15	15	391
Maple Ridge	8	9	277
Matsqui	9	10	312
Mission	4	5	187
Oak Bay	2	2	83
Richmond	4	6	243
Saanich	10	13	493
Saanich North	2	2	95
Salmon Arm	5	5	176
Spallumcheen	6	9	337
Sumas	3	3	86
Summerland	3	3	111
Surrey	12	12	402
Vancouver North	3	4	218
Vancouver South	6	13	569

<sup>1</sup>Division: a classroom in which pupils are enrolled.

<sup>★</sup>Source: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1906 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1906), 49.







said<sup>24</sup> that the new system would "require only to be generally known to be adopted by every up-to-date Province in the Dominion." Then as if doubting the accuracy of his prophecy, he asked<sup>25</sup> why people were slower to make changes in education than in other fields.

### Changes in the Financing of Education

In order to reduce its large deficit, Richard McBride's government passed<sup>26</sup> far-reaching legislation in 1906. A per teacher grant was substituted for the per pupil grant: \$360.00 for first class cities, \$420.00 for second class, and \$465.00 for third class. Rural municipality and rural school districts received per teacher grants of \$480.00. Provision was also made for supplementary grants. The effect of the legislation was to make all school boards responsible for meeting school expenses in part from local taxation. Defending the act in the legislature, F. Carter-Cotton, a former finance minister, said<sup>27</sup> that it was part of a "tendency" toward decentralization. Giving rural districts the "duty" of supporting their schools would, he said, interest them in education in the same way that cities had become interested. So drastic were the effects of the act that thereafter the assisted school districts paradoxically received proportionately more government assistance than other districts.

A comparison of the average costs per pupil in 1906 with the two succeeding years is enlightening. (See Table II.) The cost rose from \$23.00 to \$27.00 and then to \$34.00. Even allowing for the change from per pupil to per teacher grants







TABLE II  
AVERAGE EDUCATIONAL COSTS PER PUPIL, 1904-1909<sup>\*</sup>

	Total Cost of Education	Total Number of Pupils	Cost Per Pupil
1904	\$558,834	25,787	\$22.00
1905	682,946	27,354	25.00
1906	662,424	28,522	23.00
1907	798,100	30,039	27.00
1908	1,140,311	33,314	34.00
1909	1,158,883	36,227	32.00

<sup>\*</sup>Source: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1904-1909, (Victoria, King's Printer, 1904-1909).







in city districts, the increase suggests that before the legislation the government might have been providing a minimal program which many boards would have been willing to supplement if they had been empowered to do so.

### 3. The Administration of Education, 1907-1933

#### The Central Authority

In 1912 the government replaced<sup>28</sup> the right of first class cities, with the exception of Vancouver, to appoint superintendents, with the right to appoint municipal inspectors employed jointly by the cities and the provincial government. In 1920 a Department of Education was created<sup>29</sup> under the Council of Public Instruction as a branch of the civil service. By 1933 there were<sup>30</sup> seventeen provincial inspectors, two high school inspectors, three municipal inspectors, and directors of agriculture, home economics, and industrial arts. Vancouver employed a superintendent who was not a member of the Department of Education.

#### School Districts

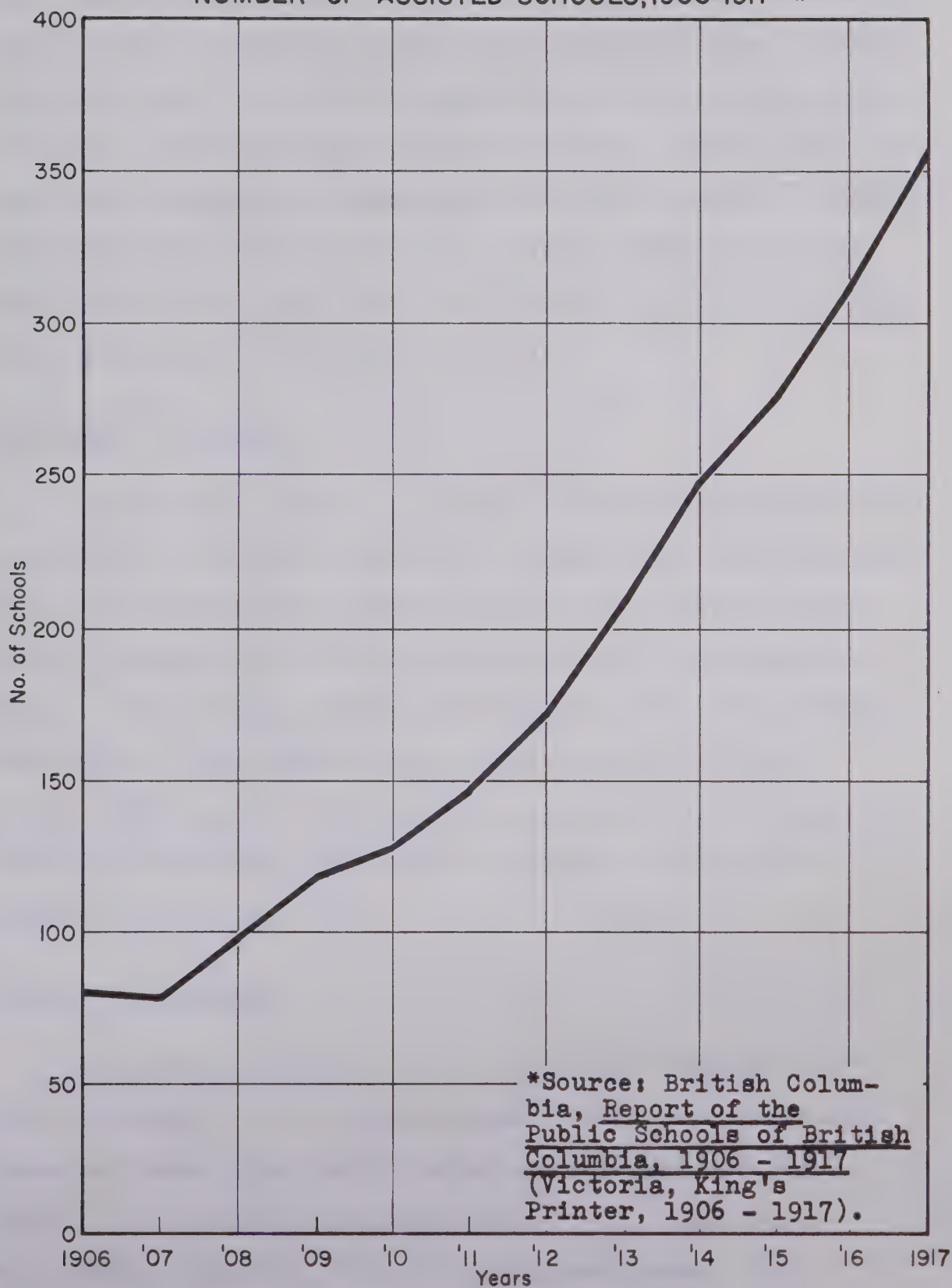
The great increase in the number of assisted schools up to 1917 is shown in Fig. 1. Three pieces of legislation passed between 1917 and 1920 appear to be attempts to improve the administration of assisted schools and to reduce their number. Schools were closed in which the average attendance fell below eight; inspectors were instructed to recommend which assisted schools should be re-classified as rural







Fig.1  
NUMBER OF ASSISTED SCHOOLS, 1906-1917 \*









school districts; and the Council of Public Instruction was empowered to replace the board of any school district with an appointed official trustee.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless assisted schools continued to increase; by 1925 they numbered<sup>32</sup> five hundred and twenty-one. In 1922 the government classified all assisted school areas as rural school districts, and ten years later ended the distinction between assisted and regularly organized rural districts.<sup>33</sup> In 1933 there were<sup>34</sup> eight hundred and twenty-one school districts, one hundred and sixty of which were administered by official trustees.

### New Types of Schools

In 1910 the Council of Public Instruction was empowered<sup>35</sup> to establish "superior schools" in rural and rural municipality school districts to teach the first two years of high school (grades nine and ten) in addition to the elementary grades. Following a strong recommendation<sup>36</sup> in the Putnam-Weir Report, many junior high schools were established between 1925 and 1933 to teach grades seven, eight, and nine. Table III gives the number and enrolments in the various types of schools in 1933.

### Control of Teachers

Inspectors continued to criticize the treatment of rural teachers. J. S. Gordon asked<sup>37</sup> that trustees place "more reliance" upon their inspector when making appointments. A. E. Miller complained that ". . . some people deliberately caused all sorts of unpleasantness," and







TABLE III  
ENROLMENTS BY TYPES OF DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS, 1933<sup>\*</sup>

	Number of:	Schools	Teachers	Pupils
City	High Schools	43	492	14,301
	Superior Schools	1	1	23
Districts	Junior High Schools	12	219	6,348
	Elementary Schools	121	1,410	49,529
District	High Schools	21	108	3,108
	Superior Schools	2	2	53
Municipality	Junior High Schools	1	10	257
	Elementary Schools	167	569	19,865
Rural	High Schools	30	56	1,143
	Superior Schools	34	34	597
Districts	Junior High Schools	1	5	66
	Elementary Schools	766	1,006	21,526

<sup>\*</sup>Source: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1933 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1933), M13 - M18.







W. N. Weatherby said that residents often made the teacher's task "undesirable to any man or woman with the slightest self-respect."<sup>38</sup> Leslie J. Bruce gave<sup>39</sup> "petty quarrels" over such matters as boarding places as reasons for most teachers staying only one year in rural districts.

To assist boards in appointing teachers, the Department of Education organized<sup>40</sup> a Teachers' Bureau in 1921. Although many boards consulted the Bureau, A. C. Stewart stated<sup>41</sup> that "a number of boards" considered asking advice "beneath their dignity" and a "usurpation of their special privileges."

### Control of School Building and Grounds

Enabling rural boards to raise money for janitors' salaries improved the state of the schools. However, some boards did not assume<sup>42</sup> this responsibility and neglected to heat, clean, and equip their schools properly. Inspector George H. Deane reported<sup>43</sup> that the floors of some schools were washed only once a year and that often a monthly sum of only one dollar per room was provided for janitor work. D. L. MacLaurin expected<sup>44</sup> some schools to "remain impoverished and unwashed" until the government took action. Inspectors also criticized school grounds. H. H. MacKenzie complained<sup>45</sup> that some trustees "religiously refrain [ed] from doing anything whatsoever to improve or beautify" school sites.

After 1914 there was less criticism of, and some occasional praise for, the care of school property in rural areas. In 1922 and 1923 Inspectors A. Anstey, Allan Matthews, and T. R. Hall commended<sup>46</sup> rural boards for their increased







attention to school buildings and grounds.

Recommendations of the Putman-Weir School Survey

J. H. Putman, inspector of schools in Ottawa, and George M. Weir, professor of education at the University of British Columbia, made an extensive survey of British Columbia's school system in 1925. In view of the experiments in centralized control which Weir conducted when he was minister of education in the Thirties, the survey's opposition to any extension of the government's powers over regularly organized school districts is sufficiently significant to merit a lengthy quotation:<sup>47</sup>

In the opinion of the Survey, . . . a system of centralized control and administration . . . would be more Prussian than British in its essential characteristics. The enervating effect on our future democracy through the weakening of its powers of local self-government in school matters, with the consequent loss of local initiative and interest in the schools, would more than counterbalance any real or imaginary gains from such a dangerous experiment. Under a corrupt political administration there would be every inducement to show political favouritism to local communities of the right political stripe; while the matter of educational appointments, under the plan advocated by many who appeared before the Commission, might easily be foisted into the arena of corrupt and corrupting partisanship. If capital expenditures were also assumed by the Government, there would be an outstanding invitation for the methods of so-called pork-barrel administration in politically favoured communities. Under such circumstances, which are by not means imaginary, our national life would become contaminated at its very source.

Instead of equality of opportunity for the citizens of our democracy, if education becomes mired in the slough of political corruption, the result would be equality of pork-barrel receipts and political favouritism. When, following an







election, an aggregation of discredited politicians was deposed by the opposition, the latter, though not responsible for initiating such a policy of political sabotage, might be tempted to retaliate by adopting similar tactics, and thus, if education were ever made a political football, the game would merrily proceed.

Nor would such a system of centralized control lead to the increased efficiency of the system. Rather indeed would the converse be the case. Any system that destroys or weakens local initiative, interest, and the sense of pride in the schools is essentially a pernicious system. Centralized control, as advocated before the Survey, would necessarily result in the establishment of a large educational bureaucracy at the Capital, which from the very nature of the case would occupy a detached and isolated position out of intimate contact with local school problems.

#### 4. The Financing of Education, 1907-1933

As a result of the new system of financing, the government contribution toward education dropped from 63 per cent in 1906 to 35 per cent in 1925. (See Table IV.) The Union of British Columbia Municipalities and others argued<sup>48</sup> before the Putnam-Weir Commission that the government should assume the entire cost of education. The Commission termed<sup>49</sup> the suggestion "a form of state socialism" of largely academic interest, as the government was unlikely "to depart from its British antecedents." It believed that it "would be useless to argue that administrative and academic control might remain with the local authorities while the Government assumed 100 per cent of the cost." In assisted school districts, however, as the government paid the salaries of teachers, the Commission favored the appointment and dismissal of teachers by the school inspectors.

It was not until 1931 that the grant system was changed







TABLE IV  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COSTS FOR SELECTED YEARS,  
1906-1933\*

	Total School Cost	Districts' Share	Government Grant	Government Grant as Per Cent of Total
1906	\$ 462,424	\$ 244,197	\$ 418,227	63.1
1910	1,917,236	1,098,660	818,576	42.7
1915	3,917,446	2,309,795	1,607,651	41.0
1920	5,470,281	3,314,346	2,155,935	39.4
1921	6,750,029	4,238,457	2,511,572	37.2
1922	7,388,578	4,691,840	2,696,738	36.4
1923	7,185,009	4 453,323	2,731,686	38.0
1924	7,741,072	5,023,302	2,717,770	35.1
1925	7,868,089	5,105,418	2,762,671	35.1
1926	7,812,160	5,095,420	2,716,740	34.8
1927	8,642,728	5,769,787	2,872,941	33.2
1928	8,723,595	5,728,576	2,995,019	34.3
1929	10,583,997	7,384,076	3,199,921	31.7
1930	9,605,156	6,264,939	3,140,217	33.4
1931	9,478,688	6,226,661	3,252,027	34.3
1932	9,261,281	5,704,259	3,556,922	38.4
1933	8,688,497	6,091,525	2,596,972	29.9

\*Sources: British Columbia, Report of Public Schools of British Columbia, 1906 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1906); M. A. Cameron, Report of Commission of Inquiry into School Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945).







The Great Depression caused the S. F. Tolmie Conservative government great concern over education costs. In 1931 grants ranging from  $33 \frac{1}{3}$  to 60 per cent of teachers' salaries were paid<sup>50</sup> to cities and to district municipalities (formerly called rural municipalities). In regularly organized rural school districts the grant was 62 per cent or \$580.00 whichever was greater. The next year, because of declining revenues, the grants were reduced<sup>51</sup> for municipal districts to range from 25 to 52 per cent. With the re-classification of assisted school districts as regularly organized rural school districts, higher grants to some rural districts were considered necessary, and now ranged<sup>52</sup> from 52 to 90 per cent. As these percentages were based upon existing salaries, the government paid a slightly higher percentage of educational costs in 1931 and 1932 than it had paid before. (See Table IV and Fig. 2.) In 1931 the Legislature empowered<sup>53</sup> the Council of Public Instruction to establish teachers' salary schedules. The Council appointed<sup>54</sup> a committee with two panels: the "teachers' panel" and the "people's panel." The two panels failed to agree and each submitted<sup>55</sup> a proposed schedule. The Council of Public Instruction approved<sup>56</sup> a schedule which was a compromise with regard to minimum salaries but which, unlike the two proposals, made no provision for experience increments.

Grants were changed<sup>57</sup> again in 1933. A formula was adopted as follows: to determine the government grant, subtract from the teacher's basic salary the sum raised by either one or one and a quarter mills (depending<sup>58</sup> upon the district



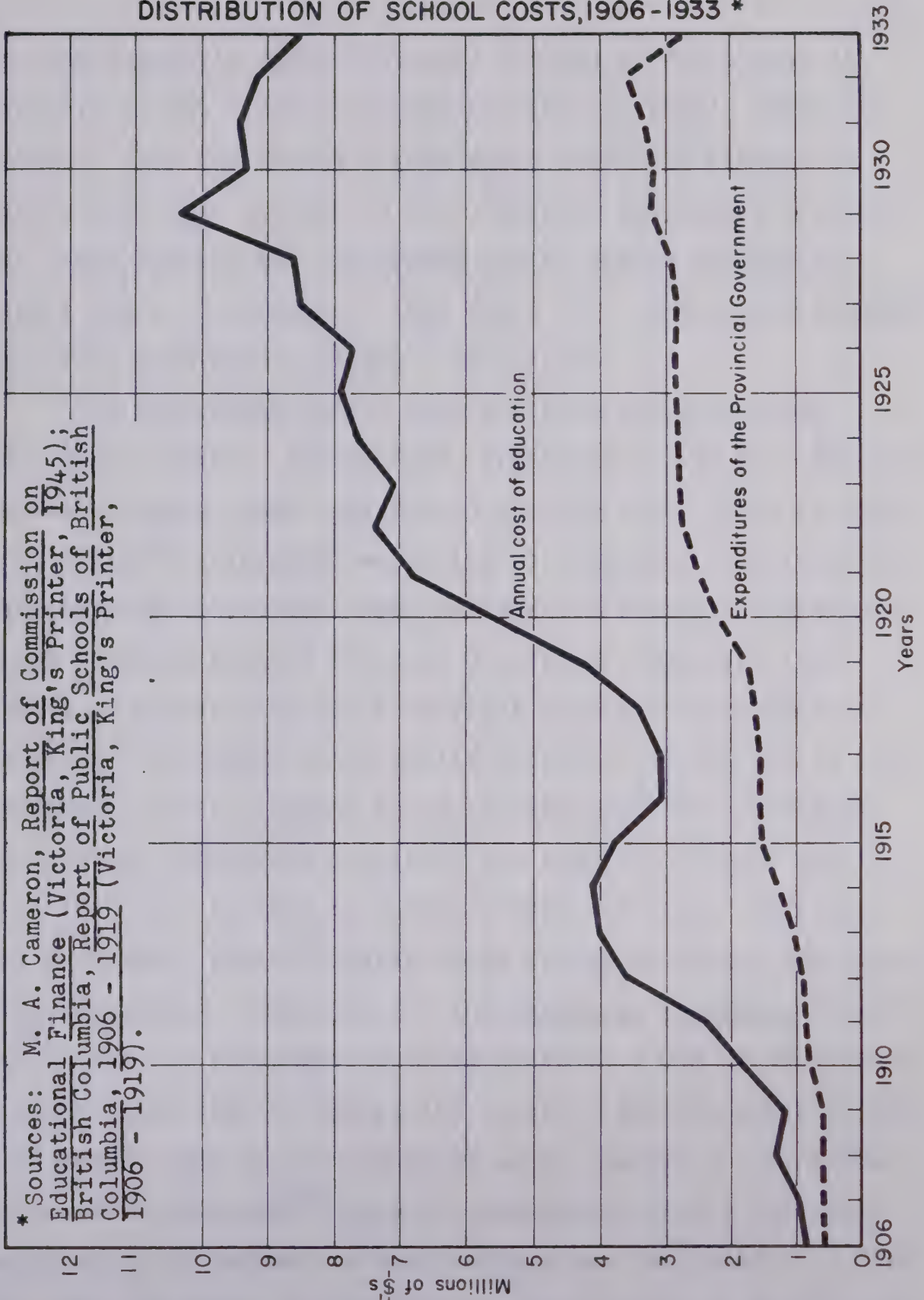




Fig.2

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COSTS, 1906 - 1933 \*

\* Sources: M. A. Cameron, Report of Commission on Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945); British Columbia, Report of Public Schools of British Columbia, 1906 - 1919 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1906 - 1919).









and the teacher's qualifications) divided by the number of teachers in the district possessing that teacher's classification. This system was a reasonably effective attempt to base grants upon ability to pay. Because the salary schedule was comparatively low the effect was to reduce the government's share of expenses. (See Table IV.) The system remained in effect with minor changes<sup>59</sup> until 1946.

The depression caused many businessmen to question educational costs. George Kidd, President of the B.C. Electric Railway Company, made speeches to service clubs early in 1932 criticizing<sup>60</sup> government expenditures. In April a delegation representing thirty-two organizations, including the Vancouver Board of Trade and the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, asked Tolmie to choose five men from eight whom they suggested, to comprise<sup>61</sup> a commission on public finance. Tolmie did so and ordered<sup>62</sup> civil servants to co-operate with the commission. In July the commission presented its report to Tolmie and instructed<sup>63</sup> him to make it public within six weeks. However, the government waited<sup>64</sup> seven weeks before releasing the report. Bruce Hutchison, columnist for the Vancouver Province, suspected<sup>65</sup> that the government delayed because it was attempting to get the commission to change its report. The proposals of the Kidd Report were as extraordinary as the manner of its formation. It recommended<sup>66</sup> that the membership of the provincial legislature be reduced to twenty-eight and the cabinet to five, and that the budget be reduced from \$25,000,000 to \$6,000,000. The chief recommendations concerning school finance were<sup>67</sup> a







reduction of \$2,000,000 in school expenditures, the limitation of free education to children under fourteen,<sup>68</sup> and the closing of the University of British Columbia. Defending the report, Kidd stated<sup>69</sup> that sixty years previously ". . . free schooling [had] comprised little more than the three R's." Another commission member, W. Lyle Macken, said<sup>70</sup> that the province "could spend a great deal less on education and get more out of it." The Financial Post praised<sup>71</sup> the report and attacked the "costly excesses of education." It declared that free education had "been carried too far" in British Columbia.

Even before the commission had been chosen, prominent political figures on both sides of the House criticized Kidd. R. L. Maitland, minister without portfolio in Tolmie's government, said,<sup>72</sup> "We are running the people's business, not that of cold-blooded corporations." Liberal opposition leader, T. Dufferin Pattullo, stated,<sup>73</sup> "We have had business men in this [Tolmie's] government and we see the fiasco they made of things." There was a strong reaction once the report was issued. George Weir labelled it<sup>74</sup> "a reactionary document" designed to condemn "youth to an intellectual serfdom at the caprice of certain capitalistic parvenues." The British Columbia Teachers' Federation called<sup>75</sup> the commission "the mouth-piece of moneyed interests" and launched<sup>76</sup> a campaign against it. Labor unions objected<sup>77</sup> strenuously to the report. The British Columbia Parent Teachers' Federation said that the imposition of fees in high school would be "class legislation," and a group of university professors addressed public meetings condemning<sup>78</sup> the report. Tolmie rejected<sup>79</sup>







the proposal for imposing high school fees. Partly because the report undermined public confidence in the Conservative government, Tolmie asked<sup>80</sup> the Liberals to unite with the Conservatives. The Liberals declined<sup>81</sup> the invitation.

#### 5. The Large Administrative Unit, 1907-1933

##### Inspectors' Attitudes Toward School Consolidations

School inspectors did not follow the precedent set in 1906 by advocating large units. Instead, impressed<sup>82</sup> by developments in the United States and eastern Canada, they sought the more limited objective of consolidated schools. In 1908 J. S. Gordon, although doubting the immediate feasibility because the people lacked "real earnestness," favored<sup>83</sup> central graded schools for "the more ambitious and energetic pupils." George S. Deane declared<sup>84</sup> in 1913, "Nothing short of an educational earthquake will, it appears, awaken some Boards to progressive action." The next year Arthur Anstey blamed<sup>85</sup> inaction on "a parochial and sentimental pride" in local schools. A. J. Dove charged that some children received "the merest scraps" of an education, and advocated<sup>86</sup> compulsory consolidations. H. H. MacKenzie complained<sup>87</sup> in 1922 that rural people did not understand the advantages of consolidated schools.

Some were more optimistic. Leslie J. Bruce reported in 1918 that there was an increasing acceptance of the idea, and S. J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, claimed in 1926 that public opinion was "beginning to view . . . central







schools . . . with favour."<sup>88</sup>

### Legislation Encouraging Consolidations and Large Units

Three amendments to the Public Schools Act between 1917 and 1921 were designed to encourage consolidations. The government agreed to pay up to one-half of "conveyance costs" to a central school with at least two teachers, permitted two or more districts to provide a central school, and established high school areas, each of which was administered by a board composed of two members from each district in the area.<sup>89</sup> The Public Schools Act of 1922 permitted<sup>90</sup> two municipalities to unite.

### Consolidations

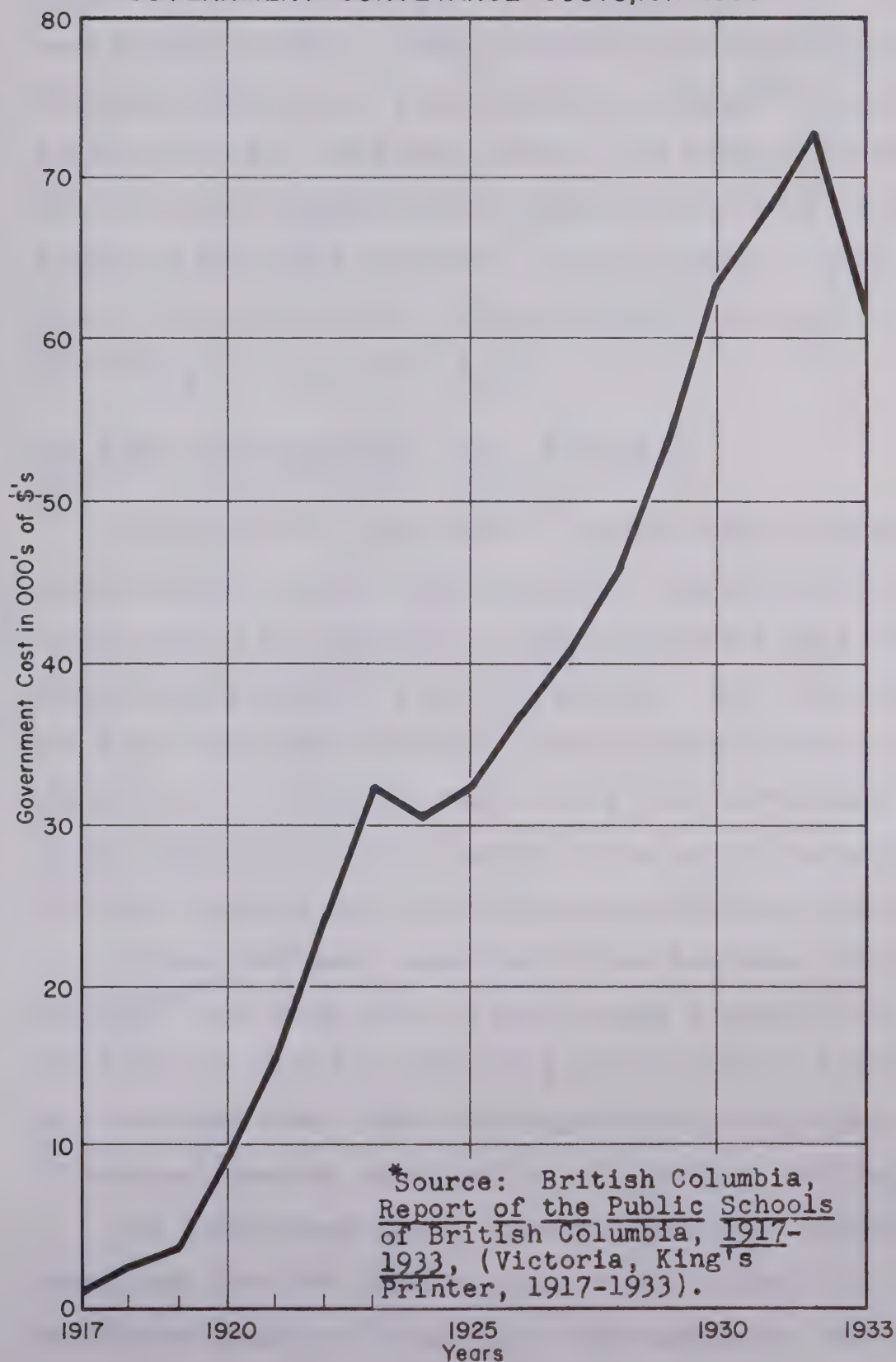
In spite of the new legislation and the exhortations of inspectors, the consolidation movement progressed very slowly. The government's contribution to conveyance costs in 1925 was only \$32,000. (See Fig. 3.) Most of the consolidations occurred<sup>91</sup> within cities and municipalities. Only thirteen rural districts operated<sup>92</sup> vans in 1925. The Putnam-Weir School Survey was impressed<sup>93</sup> with the large number of cases where consolidation "seemed desirable" but had not occurred. It recommended that the feasibility of consolidation be studied in twenty-seven specific areas. The Survey criticized<sup>94</sup> the government for being so "solicitous . . . to protect the principle of local control" as to permit assisted districts to decide whether or not to consolidate. If the Department of Education considered consolidations of certain assisted schools desirable, the Survey recommended that it should effect them,







Fig. 3  
GOVERNMENT CONVEYANCE COSTS, 1917-1933 \*









without the districts' approval if necessary.

After the Survey, a few more districts consolidated; the largest was Tsolum on Vancouver Island, which had<sup>95</sup> a seven-room school by 1933. Comox, another consolidated district on Vancouver Island, set a precedent by keeping<sup>96</sup> the one-room schools open for the lower grades. The number of school districts was not significantly reduced. (See Fig. 4.) In 1927 Inspector MacKenzie provided<sup>97</sup> an apt summary of the development of consolidations: "This movement," he said, "is not proceeding with any undue haste."

#### The Large Administrative Unit, 1929-1933

From 1929 on, advocates of reorganization turned from consolidation to what they called the "larger unit" or the "large unit," a combination of more districts than could normally be served by a central school. The large unit concept had been relatively dormant<sup>98</sup> since 1906 but events in Alberta brought it to the fore. The B.C.T.F. was particularly active in the campaign for large units in the early depression years. This section will deal with these developments in detail.

Allan Matthews, inspector of the Kamloops district, favored<sup>99</sup> the large unit in rural areas primarily to eliminate the friction caused by adjusting rural district boundaries. He considered that other advantages would be a higher calibre of trustee, greater equalization of taxation, and reduced costs.

In 1929 Perren Baker, Alberta's Minister of Education, introduced into the Alberta Legislature a school bill which would have organized large units throughout the province. The

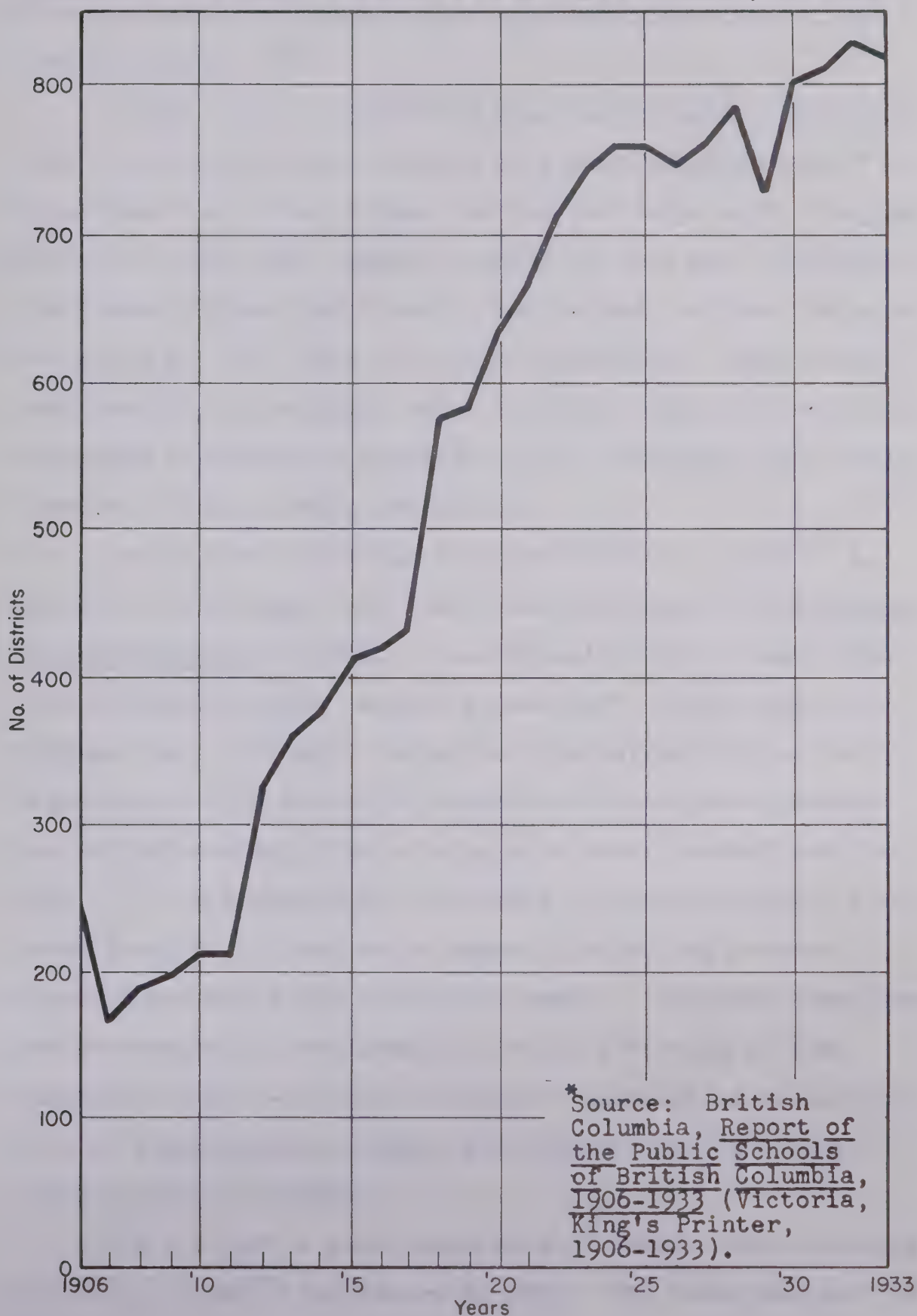






Fig. 4.

NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1906-1933 \*









bill encountered such heavy opposition that it was withdrawn.<sup>100</sup> It was introduced the next year in a modified form but was again withdrawn.<sup>101</sup>

In 1931 Baker told<sup>102</sup> the Alberta trustees' convention that "practically every student of school administration" in Canada and the United States favored the large unit. England, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, Australia, and many countries of continental Europe had already, he claimed, adopted the principle and put the larger unit into operation. Baker stated that benefits of reorganization included equality of taxation, provision of secondary education in all districts, and stabilization of the teaching profession.

Ira Dilworth, president of the B.C.T.F., wrote<sup>103</sup> an article on the large unit, which was published in the Parent-Teacher Magazine in 1931. Dilworth said that in small districts elections were "almost Gilbertian" and only narrow programs were offered. He defined the larger unit as "an organization of a number of school districts, now distinct and self-governing, into a large area under centralized control."<sup>104</sup> He added that it differed "in many respects" from consolidation. It was not a means of effecting economy although economy could eventually result. Dilworth considered the advantages of the large unit to be a "saving of the wastage of public-spirited citizens," elimination of duplication of educational services, and provision of "a broader and more varied program."

The B.C.T.F.'s first Committee on Larger Administrative Units presented<sup>105</sup> its report in 1931. The committee was "in







complete agreement" with Perren Baker. Although the small district could not be replaced in some cases, it had generally "outlived its usefulness." The committee favored the inclusion of towns and villages but not cities in the large units. It considered an area with fifty teachers an "ideal size" but conceded that in many cases a district would be "much smaller." A unit with twenty-five teachers should have a supervisor, and a smaller area a supervising principal. Some of the weaknesses of the small district were listed: rural teachers were inexperienced, poorly paid, inadequately supervised, and victimized because of spite and jealousy; consolidations were difficult to effect; there was little provision for secondary education; the cost was too high and unevenly distributed; and trustees were often incompetent, "lacking in technical knowledge," unduly influenced by local feelings, and "unsympathetic to more advanced policies." Some of the advantages mentioned were: trustees would be better qualified and would have wider interests; teachers would be able to work "without fear or favour"; there would be greater continuity of instruction; and districts would offer a broader program. The committee concluded from the failure of the plan in Alberta that "courageous and persistent effort" was necessary to overcome the "evidently partisan opposition" of the school boards that would be eliminated.

Tolmie called a provincial election for December 1933. It was apparent from proposals and developments concerning educational finance and the large administrative unit that the new government could delay a consideration of these issues no longer.







## NOTES

1. Statutes of British Columbia, c.64, s.4 (1891).
2. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1906 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1906), A12. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.
3. Statutes of British Columbia, c.48, s.4 (1901).
4. Ibid., c.42, s.2 (1896).
5. Ibid., c.48, s.12 (1901).
6. It was not until 1905 that the government required assisted schools to be managed by elected boards.
7. Ibid., c.48, s.9 (1901). At this time Vancouver and Victoria were first class cities; New Westminster, Nanaimo, Nelson, and Rossland were second class cities; and Cumberland, Columbia, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Kamloops, Kaslo, Revelstoke, Sandon, and Wellington were third class cities.
8. D. L. MacLaurin, "The History of Education in the Crown Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia and in the Province of British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 1936), 256-7.
9. H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia, (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 11.
10. Report of Public Schools, 1904, A64.
11. Statutes of British Columbia, c.48, s.9 (1901).
12. Report of Public Schools, 1904, A64.
13. Ibid., 1905, A21; ibid., 1903, A38.
14. Inspector A. C. Stewart's annual report, ibid., 1906, A29.
15. Superintendent Jessop said that ". . . should every other method fail," the teacher should clean the school himself. Ibid., 1877, 12. Superintendent Pope advised boards that responsibility for janitorial services should be "mutually decided upon" when the teacher was appointed. Ibid., 1889, 261.







16. There were differences. The cities were permitted to set teachers' salaries, and first class cities were permitted to appoint their own superintendent. Statutes of British Columbia, c.48, s.8, 20 (1901).
17. Ibid., c.30, s.26-34 (1879). Differences are noted in the above footnote. From 1873 to 1879 school boards could dismiss teachers only if the central authority agreed.
18. Interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970.
19. British Columbia, School Districts, Date of Creation and Boundaries (Victoria, King's Printer, 1921), 9-20.
20. Report of Public Schools, 1906, A21.
21. Statutes of British Columbia, c.39, s.11 (1906).
22. Report of Public Schools, 1906, A21.
23. Ibid., A32.
24. Ibid., A30.
25. Ibid., A33.
26. M. A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto, Macmillan, 1958), 337; Statutes of British Columbia, c. 39 (1906).
27. The Vancouver Province, March 8, 1906.
28. Statutes of British Columbia, c.38, s.4 (1912).
29. Ibid., c.82, s.3 (1920).
30. Report of Public Schools, 1933, M5. Victoria, New Westminster, and Sooke had municipal inspectors. However, no successor was named to J. M. Patterson of Sooke, after his death in March 1933.
31. Statutes of British Columbia, c.56, s.2 (1917); ibid., c.74, s.3 (1918); ibid., c.75, s.2 (1919).
32. J. H. Putnam and G. M. Weir, Survey of the School System (Victoria, King's Printer, 1925), 18.
33. Statutes of British Columbia, c.64, s.7 (1922); ibid., c.46, s.11 (1932).
34. King, 121.







35. Statutes of British Columbia, c.44, s.4 (1910).
36. Putnam and Weir, 110.
37. Report of Public Schools, 1906, A39.
38. Ibid., 1909, A27; ibid., 1912, A39.
39. Ibid., 1914, A57.
40. Ibid., 1922, C11.
41. Ibid., 1924, T39. In its first three years of operation the Bureau filled approximately two hundred positions annually. Ibid., 1922, C11; ibid., 1923 F11; ibid 1924, T11.
42. J. S. Gordon's annual report, ibid., 1909, A24.
43. Ibid., 1910, A27.
44. Ibid., 1912, A25. MacLaurin suggested withdrawal of all government grants to the negligent boards.
45. Ibid., 1913, A44.
46. Ibid., 1922, 31,33; ibid., 1923, F36.
47. Putnam and Weir, 30.
48. Ibid., 30, 542.
49. Ibid., 30-31.
50. Statutes of British Columbia, c.53, s.6 (1931). On the basis of location, extra-municipal area served by schools, and population, cities were divided into four sub-classes, and district municipalities into three. Government distributions were as follows:
 

Cities:	Sub-class	Contributions as Per Cent
	A	33 1/3
	B	40
	C	45
	D	50

District Municipal- ities:	Sub-class	Contributions as Per Cent
	A	45
	B	50
	C	60

Rural municipalities were re-named "district municipali-  
ties" in 1911. Revised Statutes of British Columbia,  
c.206, s.2 (1911).







51. Ibid., c.46, s.13 (1932). Government contributions were now as follows:

Cities:	Sub-class	Contributions as Per Cent
	A	25
	B	32
	C	37
	D	42

District Municipalities:	Sub-class	Contributions as Per Cent
	A	35
	B	42
	C	52

52. Ibid., The grants were as follows:

Sub-class	Contributions as Per Cent
A	52
B	62
C	75
D	90
E	Over 90 at the discretion of the Council of Public Instruction.

53. Ibid., c.53, s.6 (1931).

54. The people's panel was comprised of representatives from the British Columbia School Trustees' Association and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and three members appointed by the Minister of Education. The School, volume XXI, number 6, February 1933, 544.

55. Ibid. The teachers' proposal was as follows:  
Classification based upon certification:

	I	II	III	IV
Elementary - minimum	\$900	\$900	\$900	\$900
- increments	60	80	80	100
- maximum	1400	1600	1800	2000
Junior high- minimum	1200	1200		
- increments	80	100		
- maximum	2400	2800		
High - minimum	1400	1400	1400	1400
- increments	80	80	100	100
- maximum	2400	2600	2800	2900

The people's proposal was as follows:

	Men	Women
Elementary - minimum	\$840	\$750
- increments	60	50
- maximum	1620	1300
Junior High- minimum	980	900
- increments	70	60
- maximum	2030	1620







High	- minimum	1190	1080
	- increments	70	60
	- maximum	2520	2040

56. The schedule was as follows:  
 Elementary teachers \$780  
 Nurses, dental surgeons,  
 principals of superior  
 schools, and junior  
 high school teachers 1100  
 High school teachers 1200  
 King, 20.
57. Statutes of British Columbia, c.57, s.6 (1933).
58. Ibid. The one mill rate was used for salaries of city elementary teachers and all junior high school teachers, nurses, dental surgeons, and principals of superior schools. The one and a quarter mill rate was used for the salaries of district municipality and rural elementary teachers and all high school teachers.
59. In 1934 the one mill rate was adopted for all elementary teachers' salaries and a minimum grant of \$305.00 established. Ibid., c.58, s.7 (1934).
60. The Vancouver Province, April 4, 1932.
61. Ibid., April 5, 1932; Ormsby, 447; Files and Proceedings of B.C.T.F. number 1124, ABCTF. Cited hereafter as "Files and Proceedings."
62. The Vancouver Province, July 12, 1932. The five men whom Tolmie chose were George Kidd, R. H. Mayhew, W. L. Macken, Austin Taylor, and A. H. Douglas. Kidd and Mayhew had been chosen earlier by Education Minister J. Hinchcliffe to act on the people's panel on salaries. The School, volume XXI, number 6, February, 1933, 544.
63. The Vancouver Province, April 4, 1932.
64. The report was presented to the government on July 12 and was made public on August 30. Ibid., August 30, 1932.
65. Ibid., August 20, 1932.
66. Ibid., August 30, 1932, Ormsby, 447.
67. The Vancouver Province, August 30, 1932; The School, volume XXI, number 1, September, 1932, 169.







68. The report recommended further that students who were fourteen or fifteen pay half the cost of their education and that students sixteen and over pay the entire cost.
69. The School, volume XXI, number 3, November, 1932, 265.
70. Ibid.
71. As cited in ibid., volume XXI, number 4, December, 1932, 359.
72. The Vancouver Province, April 12, 1932.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., August 31, 1932.
75. "Files and Proceedings," number 1124, ABCTF.
76. "Report of the B.C.T.F. to Canadian Teachers' Federation," July 8, 1934, in "Files and Proceedings," number 1820, ABCTF.
77. Ibid.
78. The School, volume XXI, number 3, November, 1932, 266.  
George Weir was a member of the university committee.
79. The Vancouver Province, August 31, 1932.
80. Ormsby, 448.
81. Ibid., 499.
82. The first official mention of consolidation was made by A. C. Stewart in 1903 in reference to experiments in eighteen states and to "the Macdonald experiment in the East." Report of Public Schools, 1903, C32. The latter reference was to consolidated schools in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick maintained by Sir William Macdonald. T.C. Sugden, "The Consolidated School Movement in Alberta, 1913-1963" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1964), 9. Stewart was particularly impressed by the consolidation movement in Massachusetts. In 1918 J. W. Gibson stated that the consolidation movement in Manitoba was "past the experimental stage." Report of Public Schools, 1918, D64. It is possible that developments in Alberta also had an effect; between 1914 and 1919 there were sixty-nine consolidations in that province. Alberta, Annual Reports of the Department of Education, 1914-1919 (Edmonton King's Printer, 1914-1919), as cited in E. Wysocki.







"Consolidated School Districts in Alberta"  
(unpublished term paper, University of Alberta,  
1970), 17-20.

83. Report of Public Schools, 1908, B13.
84. Ibid., 1913, A29.
85. Ibid., 1914, A55.
86. Ibid., 1918, D32; ibid., 1917, A41. The emphasis is in the original.
87. Ibid., 1922, 27.
88. Ibid., 1918, D24; ibid., 1936, R11.
89. Statutes of British Columbia, c.56, s.4 (1917); ibid., c.44, s.2 (1918); ibid., c.56, s.4 (1921).
90. Ibid., c.64, s.36 (1922).
91. Seventeen cities and rural municipalities operated vans. Putman and Weir, 21.
92. The rural school districts operating vans were Beaver Creek, Brackendale, Castle Rock, Cawston, Dewdney, East Sooke, Hedley, Howe Sound, Lumby, Naramata, Oliver, Telkwa, and Vanderhoof. Some of these were one-room school districts which used transportation within their own sections. Ibid.
93. Ibid., 301.
94. Ibid., 18-19.
95. Report of Public Schools, 1933, M74.
96. Ibid., 1926, R12.
97. Ibid., 1927, M33.
98. It had not been completely dormant, as whenever a district municipality was established, it automatically became a rural municipality school district. District municipalities established between 1907 and 1933 were: Coldstream, Esquimalt, Fraser Mills, Glenmore, Peachland, Penticton, Pitt Meadows, Tadanac, and West Vancouver. British Columbia, Department of Municipal Affairs, Report of the Deputy Minister, 1933 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1934), D9.







99. Report of Public Schools, 1929, R29.
100. The A.T.A. Magazine, volume IX, number 10, June, 1929, 5.
101. L. J. Wilson, "Perren Baker and the United Farmers of Alberta" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1970), 87.
102. The A.T.A. Magazine, volume XI, number 7, March, 1931,  
44.
103. I. Dilworth, "Advantages of the Larger Administrative Unit," "Files and Proceedings," number 884, ABCTF.
104. Dilworth was not using the term "centralized control" in the sense in which it is used in this study.
105. Ibid., numbers 887-893, ABCTF.







## CHAPTER III

### PROPOSALS AND PROVISIONS FOR THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1933-1937

One of the early acts of the Liberal government elected in 1933 was to appoint a commission to report on school finance. The reports of the Revision Committee to the commission and of H. B. King, technical advisor, resulted in considerable discussion by the British Columbia School Trustees' Association and in new school legislation.

#### 1. The 1933 Election

Although the editor of The School stated<sup>1</sup> in November that education was a very important issue in the provincial general election campaign, the matter of the control of education was apparently not debated by many candidates. T. Dufferin Pattullo, leader of the Liberal party, stated<sup>2</sup> that it was "appallingly apparent" that there should be "a most thorough review" of the educational system. The statement<sup>3</sup> in the platform of the recently formed Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.) party promising a system of education "designed to prepare young people for a full and complete participation in a co-operative order" implied centralized control in at least the field of curriculum. George Weir, Liberal candidate in Vancouver Point Grey, argued<sup>4</sup> for a centralized, efficient educational system







"giving equal opportunity for all."

One can only speculate as to why Weir changed his views on centralized control so radically between 1925 and 1933. (For his earlier views, see Chapter II.) It is possible that the decrease in educational expenditures caused by<sup>5</sup> the depression and the conflict over educational finance convinced him of the desirability of a more stable source of revenue than could be provided by local authorities. If the government were to provide the funds, Weir thought that it should also exercise control. (See Section 7 of this chapter.) Weir's association<sup>6</sup> with H. B. King, a strong advocate of centralized control, as a personal friend and as a colleague, may have contributed to his changed views.

The Liberals, having won thirty-five out of a total of forty-eight seats, became the government and the C.C.F. with seven seats, became the official opposition. Weir, who became Minister of Education, announced<sup>7</sup> some of his plans. There would be experiments in the "state control" or "socialized administration" of education. Although the province did not intend to assume the entire cost of education, "a movement in that direction" seemed desirable. He stated<sup>8</sup> that socialized control was probably the best means to "keep abreast" of changing conditions. Weir remarked<sup>9</sup> that the existing system of educational finance was inequitable and that the government would recast it "immediately following the session" of the legislature.

A week before the opening of the legislature, the







Municipal Taxation Commission, appointed by Tolmie the previous year, and often referred to as the Harper Commission, presented its report to the government. Briefs submitted revealed considerable dissatisfaction with the high incidence of school taxation upon real property. The Vancouver Board of School Trustees said<sup>10</sup> that ownership of land was not a fair indication of ability to pay. The Associated Property Owners' Association and the North Vancouver Board of Trade wanted<sup>11</sup> a readjustment in the method of financing schools. The B.C.S.T.A. and the Municipality of Matsqui were more specific, favoring<sup>12</sup> an increase in income tax. The North Vancouver District Ratepayers' Association and the Victoria Ratepayers' Association declared<sup>13</sup> that because it was the province's responsibility to provide education, the provincial government should pay the entire cost. The Vancouver Real Estate Exchange's representation favored<sup>14</sup> control of education by the provincial Department of Education with the assistance of small local advisory committees. The commission, however, considered<sup>15</sup> local administration of "many . . . general services" advisable. It recommended increased income tax rates on larger incomes as a means of providing<sup>16</sup> revenue to the municipalities and the provision of means for making<sup>17</sup> assessments equitable and uniform. The commission urged<sup>18</sup> the provincial government "to embark courageously upon a policy of Provincial control, and financing of public services and the institutions necessary therefor."







## 2. The 1934 Session of the Legislature

In March Weir told<sup>19</sup> the legislature that the Pattullo government would introduce "wide educational reforms" and put educational finance on a "new and fair basis" during the next year. Educational legislation passed<sup>20</sup> at the session increased government grants slightly, raised the age of free tuition from fifteen to eighteen, and removed the voting disqualification from ratepayers in arrears.

The government's debt was now \$165,000,000 and its bank credit had been cut off.<sup>21</sup> According to Bruce Hutchison, Finance Minister John Hart's budget revealed<sup>22</sup> that the province was "flat broke and living on [its] rich relatives at Ottawa." Much of the time at the session was given to debate on Pattullo's controversial Special Powers Act which gave<sup>23</sup> the government the power to legislate in many fields between sessions.

## 3. The Establishment of the British Columbia Commission on School Finance

In June, Weir announced<sup>24</sup> plans for an enquiry into the financing of schools. The organization for the enquiry, which he described as "the most comprehensive ever formed for the purpose in a Canadian province," was to consist of four departments: a large general committee of about thirty persons to be nominated by public organizations interested in education; a revision committee "to sift and interpret" the







evidence gathered by the large committee; a technical advisor in the person of H. B. King, principal of Kitsilano High School; and a commission consisting of Weir and Hart. The plan was that the information would "flow from the large . . . body through intermediate stages . . . to the cabinet. . . ." The report of the commission, to be finished by the end of the year, would form the basis for undertaking at the next session of the legislature "a complete revision of the existing school financial system" which would alter the whole incidence of school taxation on land and income and "virtually alter the financial position of municipalities."

King, who had taught<sup>25</sup> for thirty years in the Vancouver school system, was granted<sup>26</sup> leave of absence by the Vancouver School Board from July 1 to December 31. The previous January he had stated<sup>27</sup> in a radio address that local control of education had broken down. King said<sup>28</sup> concerning his appointment:

I haven't sought any position and am not joining the civil service. I don't want to be a civil servant if I can escape it. In accepting my appointment, I have stipulated that I want to return when my work is done. I shall be applying scientific statistical procedure and in general the impersonal and objective methods of research to the problems I have to deal with. I have some ideas already but am not going to be influenced by any prepossessions (sic) I may have.

The next day The Vancouver Sun praised<sup>29</sup> Weir for his "refusal to be satisfied" with the views which he had expressed ten years earlier in the Putnam-Weir Report. The editorial expected "great things" of the commission. In a radio speech in September Pattullo said<sup>30</sup> that the commission's report







would receive the attention of the cabinet and that he hoped to arrive at "the most equitable and effective methods of raising revenues for the schools and of distributing the burden of school costs." The next month a Vancouver Province editorial took a sceptical look<sup>31</sup> at government enquiries in the field of municipal finance and wagered "dollars to doughnuts" that nothing would be done about the report on the government's latest commission of enquiry.

#### 4. The Report of the Revision Committee

The members of the revision committee were:<sup>32</sup> Harry Charlesworth, general secretary of the B.C.T.F. (chairman); Mrs. Paul Smith, Liberal M.L.A.; Herbert Anscomb, Independent M.L.A.; Robert Connell, C.C.F. - M.L.A.; H. F. Angus, professor at the University of British Columbia; David Leeming, mayor of Victoria, and executive member, Union of British Columbia Municipalities; R. F. Blandy, executive member, Union of British Columbia Municipalities; and J. P. Carr, executive member of the B.C.S.T.A.

Briefs were received<sup>33</sup> from fourteen organizations: the Vancouver School Board, the Provincial Parent-Teacher Federation, the B.C.S.T.A., the B.C.T.F., the Vancouver-New Westminster and District Trades and Labour Council, the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, the Vancouver Parent-Teacher Federation, the Victoria Young Liberal Association, the Victoria Real Estate Board, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the Mid-Island and Comox Valley Branch of the







B.C.S.T.A., the Advisory Board of the Farmers' Institute, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (British Columbia Branch), and the Vancouver Board of Trade.

As early as November 1934 the revision committee was able to report<sup>34</sup> "excellent progress." It stated that the outcome of its report would be a system of educational finance "less haphazard and more equitable." It added<sup>35</sup> that there was substantial agreement in the briefs submitted on four points: that there be a considerable reduction in taxes on land and property, that income tax was "the best and most equitable basis" for financing education, that the provincial government should assume responsibility for a "substantial portion" of educational costs, and that there should be larger units of administration. The committee classified<sup>36</sup> its recommendations and the recommendations of organizations submitting briefs under eight headings: the distribution of the burden of school finance, new sources of revenue, centralization or decentralization of financial control, size of administrative units, school fees, cost of text-books, saving without loss of efficiency, and general recommendations. Of these, the first four are of direct concern to this study.

The B.C.S.T.A. recommended<sup>37</sup> that the provincial government pay all "ordinary expenses" and that local authorities pay such "extraordinary expenses" as school buildings. The B.C.T.F. recommended<sup>38</sup> that the province provide "the largest possible share" of the cost of a minimum program of education. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities







urged<sup>39</sup> that the owners of real property be given "substantial relief." The committee recommended<sup>40</sup> that the province pay "a substantial portion" of the total cost and that this money be provided from the consolidated revenue of the province and not from any taxes "specially earmarked." It supported these recommendations by stating<sup>41</sup> that education was a provincial responsibility and that "some measure of equalization" in sharing the cost of education was necessary. The Vancouver Sun stated<sup>42</sup> that the "outstanding" recommendations of the report were those dealing with the distribution of the burden of school finance.

Most briefs favored<sup>43</sup> increasing the income tax to obtain additional revenue. The main difference of opinion<sup>44</sup> was that some wished the increase to apply to higher incomes only, while others wanted a graded income tax. The committee recommended<sup>45</sup> a 2 per cent income tax on all persons whose incomes exceeded \$50.00 a month.

The B.C.S.T.A. and the Vancouver School Board favored<sup>46</sup> local control of funds raised locally. On the other hand, the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, and the Vancouver Board of Trade all favored<sup>47</sup> centralization. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association and the Vancouver Board of Trade recommended<sup>48</sup> administrative control by a permanent Board of Control similar to the Board of Governors of the University of British Columbia. The committee's recommendation was<sup>49</sup> that there be "some definite relation" between the measure of centralization or decentralization







of control and the financial obligations undertaken by the provincial government and the local districts respectively.

Seven of the eight briefs mentioning the size of school districts favored larger units. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities wanted <sup>50</sup> to see the province divided into approximately six districts under "some new form of local government." The B.C.S.T.A., in accordance with a resolution passed at its 1934 Convention, recommended<sup>51</sup> that "in many cases" administrative units should be enlarged. The B.C.T.F. regarded<sup>52</sup> the large unit as the "greatest improvement" possible. "Until such a step is taken," said the teachers' brief, "many acute problems will remain unsolved." The British Columbia Division of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association recommended<sup>53</sup> large districts "based upon topography and population" under centralized control in place of the existing "eight hundred and twenty-one school districts."<sup>54</sup> "It would appear impossible," said the brief of the Manufacturers' Association, "to expect that with eight hundred and twenty-one different sets of authorities dispensing public funds for educational purposes that any degree of uniformity . . . can be achieved." The Vancouver Province commented<sup>55</sup> that the advantages of "centralized education" were the elimination of waste, the centralized buying of supplies, centralized control of teachers and of teachers' salaries, and standardized schools and school equipment. However, the editorial continued, local needs varied. Furthermore, education touched the citizen "in the very bosom of his family." Local control was the outcome of experience







and provided "education in citizenship." "It is more important in the long run," it concluded, "[to] have self-government than [to] have perfect government." The revision committee recommended<sup>56</sup> a system of larger units, each unit to be administered by a director appointed by and responsible to the Department of Education and by "some form" of school board to be composed partly of elected members and partly of members appointed by the Department of Education. The committee recommended further that each unit be a separate taxation unit for projects locally initiated and financed, that provincial salary schedules for teachers "be considered," and that isolated school districts which could not be included in large districts be administered directly by the Department of Education.

The revision committee listed<sup>57</sup> the advantages that "research studies and surveys" agreed were made possible by large administrative units: more efficient operation, better education in rural schools, possible consolidations, removal of boundaries and disputes arising therefrom, better facilities for secondary education, improved supervision, greater stability of teaching staff, fairer distribution of cost, improvement in administrative personnel, selection of elective subjects on the basis of the community's needs, better facilities for sports and recreation, and more continuity of instruction. The committee's report quoted<sup>58</sup> at some length from Perren Baker's 1931 speech to the Alberta trustees. (See Chapter II.) It also quoted<sup>59</sup> from a speech by Horace L. Brittain, "the recognized expert of Government







and municipal finance." The report gave<sup>60</sup> statements of officials of the recently reorganized York Township, Ontario. The inspector, A. A. Jordan, said that the taxes were now uniform, dental services were provided, and teachers were placed "where they [would] do the best work." C. Webster, the secretary-treasurer, stated that text-books and insurance were less expensive, and that schools were better maintained. D. B. Hood, chairman of the board, and A. A. Gray, reeve of York Township, mentioned equality of taxation, economy of operation, and formation of auxiliary classes as benefits of the new system.

Although all members of the committee signed the report, three dissented<sup>61</sup> from specific recommendations.

##### 5. The 1935 Session of the Legislature

In 1935 a C.C.F. member of the legislature, Mrs. Dorothy Steeves, who had been elected in a by-election in North Vancouver the previous year, sounded a note of scepticism<sup>62</sup> in her maiden speech. The C.C.F., she declared, had regarded Weir as "the brightest star in the government crown" but ". . . the setting was a badly tarnished diadem." She continued:

The Pattullo government is a huge mechanical organism, a robot, paralyzed because it lacks the vital spark to put it into operation. This is a time for leaders and thinkers to have strong decisive opinions and to act on them. It is a time to do and dare. It is not a time for armchair philosophizing or for scholarly intellectuals to sit on their academic fences putting up with conditions in the name of conventional science.







Dorothy Steeves concluded that as neither state health insurance nor the educational surveys would result in any government action, Weir should resign from a government "which had so signally failed to carry out his cherished policies."

On March 4 the report of the revision committee was laid before the House.<sup>63</sup> The Vancouver Sun stated<sup>64</sup> that a report from the commissioners themselves was expected before prorogation. Weir commented<sup>65</sup> favorably in the House concerning the proposal for a 2 per cent income tax. Weir promised that eventually the province would bear the entire cost of education. The Vancouver Sun commented<sup>66</sup> editorially that it was "infinitely more sensible" that income rather than land should "bear the weight of education." The Vancouver Province also supported<sup>67</sup> the proposal for an increased income tax. Dorothy Steeves assured the House that nothing would come of Weir's promises. "There is no danger that this government will go far in radical legislation," she stated. "They never can and they never will. They haven't the intellectual fortitude."<sup>68</sup>

Much of the time at the 1935 session was given to debating a new bridge to be built over the Fraser River at New Westminster. Although the measure finally passed, it caused a rift in the Liberal party. Hutchison said<sup>69</sup> that like the 1935 session, the 1936 session "had nothing to show for its labours." Certainly so far as educational legislation was concerned, the session had accomplished nothing. This session which Weir had said would bring many changes had not passed a single amendment to the Public Schools Act.







The Province was of the opinion, however, that change was still to be expected.<sup>70</sup> "Weir," it stated, "[was] clearing the way for a radical reorganization of the school system."

An indication that the government intended to proceed with recommendations of the revision committee concerning the organization of large units is contained<sup>71</sup> in Pattullo's speech on April 24 to the B.C.T.F. Annual General Meeting. In pursuing the survey's work, Pattullo said, school inspectors were analysing the financial statements of school boards, determining the boundaries of the large units, deciding upon "routines, schemes, and principles" for the units, and studying the effect of uniform school rates and assessments.

## 6. The King Report

Although King had been granted leave of absence by the Vancouver School Board up to only the end of December 1934, he was still preparing<sup>72</sup> his report in March of the following year. Finally, on March 22 he submitted<sup>73</sup> his report to Commissioners Weir and Hart. The government announced<sup>74</sup> that the report advocated a "reconstruction" of the British Columbia school system and that it would be made public "shortly." King remained<sup>75</sup> in the employment of the Department of Education. The report, which was not made public<sup>76</sup> until August 8, was two hundred and thirty pages in length and consisted of eighteen chapters, two appendices, forty-three tables, and fourteen graphs. The thirteen "more







important recommendations" were tabulated in a letter of transmittal to the commissioners. (See Appendix B.)

The first chapter dealt very briefly with the organization of education in British Columbia. Chapters II and III divided<sup>77</sup> the history of the financing of public education in British Columbia into five periods:

Period I. The Period of the Complete Centralization of School Financing (1872-1888)

Period II. The Beginning of Devolution (1888-1893)

Period III. The Period of Per Capita Grants (1893-1906)

Period IV. The Period of Growth through Local Interest and Continued Devolution (1906-1929)

Period V. The Period of Basic Salaries and Financial Breakdown (1929-1935).

Chapter IV, entitled "Fundamental Conceptions," concluded<sup>78</sup> that "full value" had not been received for the money spent on education because of the lack of "an adequate philosophy" and of efficient administrative machinery.

It has not been recognized that education is a peculiarly difficult professional task. . . . The educationists in English-speaking countries have been hampered by the fact that the actual machinery of education has been in the control largely of laymen. . . . It has been as though an army was controlled by elected Municipal Councils and organized and trained by regimental officers brought up upon the traditions of Wellington, under a general staff with limited executive powers.

. . . It could hardly be said . . . that there is the application to this side of the public service of even that measure of intelligence necessary for the management of a small retail business. The writer therefore does not think that full value has hitherto been received for the money which has been expended upon







education, and he states his further opinion that, with the existing administrative machinery, full value can never be obtained.

King recommended<sup>79</sup> continual curriculum revision "under scientific direction" and the adoption of "modern" educational objectives. He emphasized<sup>80</sup> that education was constitutionally a provincial responsibility.

In the early history of the Province the entire financial provision for education was made by the Government. The raising of money by local bodies . . . is a later development, partly an imitation of what was done elsewhere, partly the result of convenience and the desire of the Provincial Government to be rid of a financial burden; but it is incontestable that in constitutional law the responsibility is upon the Provincial Government adequately to maintain the schools, and it is therefore bound to see that financial provision is made for doing this. Should it be impossible properly to maintain the schools from local sources of taxation, under local administration, the Government must assume the responsibility, and in such circumstances cannot place it upon bodies which it has itself created and to which it has delegated powers.

The next two chapters were apparently intended largely to combat the influence of the Kidd Report. (See Chapter II.) Chapter V gave the opinions of various economists<sup>81</sup> supporting King's contention that ". . . education is not merely an activity of society upon which wealth is expended, but that it directly contributes to production and is in fact one of the productive activities of society." Chapter VI was entitled "What They Think in England." At the turn of the century, according to King, many members of the English upper and middle classes suspected<sup>82</sup> that the "downward extension of public education" was a "socially disruptive force." Such thinking was still common in British Columbia among some who







had left England a generation previously and it was "implicit in the Kidd Report of 1932." King believed,<sup>83</sup> however, that the Kidd Report's recommendation to end free education after a pupil's fourteenth year did not reveal the modern intelligent Englishman's thinking. "It is a mark of our backwardness that [the controversy over free education] should have occurred at all." King therefore wrote a letter<sup>84</sup> to "outstanding personalities" in England asking for their opinions on "the place of education in modern society." He explained that many immigrants from England were "responsive . . . [to] a knowledge of what Englishmen think today . . . to a degree hard probably for [the personalities] to understand." King asked: Should education be provided for all citizens? Is education essential to the life of society? Are British Columbia's expenditures upon education excessive? The respondents answered<sup>85</sup> the first two questions in the affirmative but declined to comment directly on the third question.

Chapter VII dealt with the administration and financing of education in English-speaking countries. King commended<sup>86</sup> the tendency in all British countries except Canada to regard education as "a state service." Government contributions in these countries, he said, ranged from 50 to 100 per cent. In the United States, on the other hand, state government contributions ranged<sup>87</sup> from 8.4 to 51.7 per cent. King believed<sup>88</sup> that Canada had followed American rather than British principles because Canada was close to the United States and because the public school system had begun earlier







in Canada than in England, at a time when social thinking was less advanced. In Egerton Ryerson's day, ". . . the sense of community was confined to the local community" and the organization of a system based upon "localism" was natural. However, the system had not changed as the community had widened. Thus the English were in a favored position and their statesmen did not confine "themselves to telling teachers about the nobility of their work," but ensured<sup>89</sup> "that the provision for education was not imperilled by the parsimony of some communities or the penury of others." Almost all of the troubles encountered in North America, King stated,<sup>90</sup> came "from . . . local control and . . . dependence upon local support." King saw no necessary connection between "the principles of Canadian democracy" and the system of local control: "A democracy based upon the tyranny of rustic triumvirates is one of those perversions of democracy which Plato has described."<sup>91</sup>

Chapters VIII and IX were entitled "Principles of Taxation and "Income Tax" respectively. King considered<sup>92</sup> the income tax to be sound fiscal policy but warned that when the tax was high it removed incentive. As the federal government, according to King, had recently announced<sup>93</sup> imminent "great increases in income tax," he believed that the province would probably have to levy a general sales tax to obtain new revenue for education. King considered<sup>94</sup> that the sales tax was productive, economic, simple, and easily understood. To compensate for its inequity, King advocated<sup>95</sup> decreasing the income tax on lower incomes.







King conceded<sup>96</sup> that the sales tax was usually unpopular, but thought that if its purpose was to finance education, it might be "more acceptable." Apparently believing mistakenly that sales taxes were always indirect, King said that the courts<sup>97</sup> would probably rule such a provincial tax unconstitutional and that a dominion-provincial agreement would probably have to precede its imposition. Although King believed that land taxes were so high as to be confiscatory and that they were unreliable during depressions, he advocated<sup>98</sup> that land should "bear a portion" of educational costs as schools enhanced the value of neighboring property. He contended<sup>99</sup> that a general sales tax and a "very light tax upon land" would pay "almost the entire cost" of education in British Columbia.

Chapter X gave the opinions of thirteen provincial assessors on school taxation and administration. King concluded<sup>100</sup> that "in general" the assessors believed that rural school districts should be abolished as separate taxation areas, that unorganized territory should be formed into one area or a small number of areas with uniform assessment, and that "the system of Rural School Boards and annual school meetings" was unsatisfactory. Although a study of the assessors' statements reveals his first two conclusions to be correct, only three assessors criticized school boards directly, the same number that advocated increasing the income tax. One assessor, however, attacked<sup>101</sup> local administration very strongly:







I suppose that there is little to be said about Rural School Trustees that is not painfully evident. An experience of more than twenty years with every species of trustee has confirmed me in the belief that they are better gone. In the great percentage of annual school meetings there is seldom a proper quorum, and in the few instances of a large attendance this is usually due to the expectation that some scandal or petty local feud is going to be aired.

Generally speaking, the average trustee is more or less illiterate and unsuited alike by training and temperament to fill any executive position, however humble. It would be unfair not to mention that there are numerous exceptions to the above generality.

Chapter XI, "An Experiment in Centralization," consisted of reports on the large administrative unit in the Peace River from the unit's inspector of schools and its official trustee, and King's criticism of the project. The reports are considered in Chapter V of this study. King praised<sup>102</sup> the plan as an "enlightened and efficient type of school organization which should work well if the public of the area understood its purpose and gave the co-operation necessary for its success." He recommended,<sup>103</sup> however, that in similar schemes the inspector should also be the official trustee or have jurisdiction over the official trustee. To satisfy the "psychological craving [of parents and citizens] to make their wishes understood to the school administration," King recommended<sup>104</sup> an advisory council, partly elected and partly appointed, and smaller regional councils. "The creation of local advisory bodies . . . should gratify the desire for local participation without perpetuating the weaknesses of the old system."

Chapter XII presented "A Scheme for the Centralized Financing of Education" under which the provincial government







would pay<sup>105</sup> the entire cost of education except for the interest and sinking fund charges of municipalities; i.e., building costs already incurred. Because of necessary "extensive administrative reorganization," King said that it would not be possible to institute this plan of centralized financing immediately, and therefore proposed as "an interim solution" the immediate assumption by the Department of Education of financial control over rural school districts and third class cities, and the granting<sup>106</sup> of relief to municipalities through an equalization fund.

King recommended<sup>107</sup> that new revenue be obtained from an income tax or a sales tax, or a combination of both. He thus disagreed with the recommendations of the revision committee and of most of the briefs submitted that the revenue be obtained entirely from an income tax. King recommended further that the provincial government levy and collect a land tax of from three to four mills. (See Appendix B.) He presented two schemes, both of which assumed a cost of approximately \$9,000,000 annually, the approximate average<sup>108</sup> for the previous three years. The first scheme assumed a three mill land tax and necessitated increased payments from consolidated revenue of approximately \$3,000,000. The second scheme assumed a land tax of four mills and required<sup>109</sup> an increase of \$2,230,296. King advised<sup>110</sup> the commission that either the first or second scheme but "preferably" the first be adopted. Because the birth-rate was low at the time, King anticipated<sup>111</sup> comparatively stable school costs.







The scheme has two obvious weaknesses. First, King did not suggest a source for the extra revenue necessary for the interim municipal equalization fund.<sup>112</sup> Second, and more important, he did not anticipate the effects of the devalued United States currency.<sup>113</sup> This failure was particularly serious as he recommended a fixed mill rate. As increases in assessments tend to lag behind other increases in periods of inflation, under King's scheme the taxes on land would have raised a steadily decreasing proportion of needed revenue.

Chapter XIII dealt with administrative reorganization. King thought that there were far too many school districts in British Columbia. He was particularly critical<sup>114</sup> of the rural school districts: "The great number of them that are badly managed are very badly managed indeed." In December 1934 one hundred and sixty-one of the six hundred and thirteen rural districts had not submitted<sup>115</sup> financial statements to the Department of Education. When statements were submitted, they were so inaccurate that little credence could be placed in them. King conceded that there was usually less "petty interference" with teachers in municipal than in rural districts, but with the exception of Vancouver, Victoria, and New Westminster,<sup>116</sup> the municipal districts lacked effective, professional, executive leadership. The fault lay<sup>117</sup> in the small size of districts. Teachers were often chosen on the basis of local favoritism and in any case it was absurd to have eight hundred and twenty-six appointing







bodies. Too much money was involved in public education for continued waste and inefficiency to be tolerated. King recommended<sup>118</sup> that each of the existing inspectorates, with modifications to ensure "social and topographic unity," become a large educational area similar to the Peace River unit. This recommendation would have reduced the number of school districts in British Columbia to approximately twenty.<sup>119</sup> King favored<sup>120</sup> the abolition of school boards and the assumption of their duties by provincially appointed directors of education. Under a system of centralized financing, King contended,<sup>121</sup> school boards would be "unnecessary." If a less centralized system were adopted, he conceded<sup>122</sup> that ". . . some kind of Board [would] be necessary." King recommended<sup>123</sup> that all appointments of teachers to districts be made by a "departmental appointments committee" composed of "such persons as the Director of Personnel, the Registrar of the Department of Education, the Principals of the Normal Schools, and the Professor of Education of the University of British Columbia." Every July the directors of education would inform<sup>124</sup> the committee of their requirements. The committee would assign teachers to each area and each director would make assignments within his area. The committee would also decide upon important promotions. King recommended<sup>125</sup> that an "inter-departmental board of permanent officials" from the Departments of Education, Public Works, and Finance decide upon the construction of new buildings. It might be "expedient" to permit some cities to remain







outside the reorganized system provided their autonomy did not interfere with the system's success; in particular, they would not be permitted to appoint teachers.<sup>126</sup>

Chapter XIV presented King's "Interim Solution to Rural School Administration." "Rural areas and third class cities" should be reorganized "at the earliest possible time." (See Appendix B.) King estimated<sup>127</sup> that with a five and one-half mill rate upon land in these areas, no increase in provincial revenue would be necessary. Some confusion results from King's recommendation in his letter of transmittal that only "rural school districts in unorganized territory" be involved in "the first stage" as this would have resulted in the exclusion not only of third class cities but also of villages.<sup>128</sup>

King objected to the revision committee's recommendation that there be "some form of school board" in the large units. Referring to the committee's recommendation that "small school districts where no grouping could take place" be administered directly by the Department of Education, he asked<sup>129</sup> why lay control should be best for some schools and "professional control" for others. A defender of school boards might reply that King himself gave the answer when he he stated<sup>130</sup> that the rural municipality school boards established in 1906 attracted "men of ability." King added<sup>131</sup> that removing large areas from departmental administration would raise the mill rate in isolated areas; in other words, districts with local control would not be permitted to participate in the centralized financial scheme. It seems clear







that King saw a necessary connection among financial obligation, financial control, and administrative control. Perhaps for this reason he did not mention that there were school boards in British Columbia before there was local financing of education. In the writer's opinion, King was unwise to oppose the revision committee's recommendation concerning school boards. The committee was sufficiently vague to have permitted King to compromise without seriously endangering the principles upon which his other recommendations were based. By differing with the committee, King forced the commissioners either to choose between the two recommendations or to ignore them both.

The second stage of King's plan was the inclusion of municipalities in the large units. (See Appendix B.) The units would then have some "new type of governing body" to control locally initiated projects without "diminishing the authority of the professional Directors of Education." King discussed alleged justification for retaining school boards. In replying to the argument that local control would diminish without them, King said<sup>132</sup> that this interest "often took the form of oppressing the teachers." He believed<sup>133</sup> that a desirable form of local interest could be better maintained by the election of "local advisers." To the anticipated objection that education could not be democratically administered without school boards, King replied<sup>134</sup> that the provincial government was "as representative of democracy as a contentious annual meeting," that in England no school







boards existed and many of the three hundred and seventeen local educational authorities administered larger units than British Columbia's entire system, and that his scheme was democratic "in the truest sense because it enlarge[d] and encourage[d] educational opportunity." King's references to the English system are somewhat misleading. Although earlier in the report he had mentioned that the local educational authorities were elected bodies, the casual reader might well infer from this chapter that they were appointed.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the argument that the entire province could be compared with a single educational area in England seems to disregard geography entirely.

Chapter XV enumerated<sup>136</sup> possible economies such as the junior high school, correspondence courses, larger classes in manual training and home economics, the high school study-hall, improved budgeting and uniform school accounting, the closure of one of the two normal schools, grouping of schools under a supervisory principal, and the arrangement of keys on typewriters. Chapter XVI concluded<sup>137</sup> that permitting municipal councils to control the financing of schools would be "to replace a system which generates friction by one which would generate more friction." Chapter XVII opposed the imposition of high school fees, and Chapter XVIII reiterated<sup>138</sup> King's contention that British Columbia's low birth rate would "have a constant tendency to prevent costs from rising."







## 7. The 1935 B.C.S.T.A. Convention

When the delegates to the annual B.C.S.T.A. Convention met at Harrison Hot Springs in September, many trustees felt that the continued existence of school boards was being threatened. In his opening remarks, President Dave Chapman said:<sup>139</sup> "Should the authorities adopt and act on [the King] report as it now stands, which in my opinion is hardly conceivable, it will ultimately mean the elimination of trustees and the winding up of our association."

In his address to the trustees that afternoon, Weir dismissed<sup>140</sup> charges that "certain recommendations" of the King Report would lead to "Hitlerism or Fascism or some other imaginary 'ism.'" He gave<sup>141</sup> two definitions of "democracy." One, he said, was "the blessed privilege of making our own mistakes" while the second was "the means of social organization that will best enable our people to share as fully as possible in the best of life." One essential meaning of democracy, he continued,<sup>142</sup> was the equalization of educational opportunity. After speaking of the benefits brought to the Peace River area, he said<sup>143</sup> that one objective of the King Report was "to give good service in outlying communities." He added<sup>144</sup> that the government had a responsibility to see that its money was spent wisely. However, Weir assured<sup>145</sup> the trustees that the government would not abolish municipal school boards immediately as it lacked the money, administrative machinery, and trained personnel.







Later the trustees discussed the King Report at length. J. P. Carr, past-president of the B.C.S.T.A. and a member of the revision committee, favored<sup>146</sup> large districts but opposed centralized control. He said that "everyone" on the the revision committee had agreed that the small district system was "antiquated, . . . not efficient and [had] been the cause of much trouble and dissatisfaction throughout the Province for many years." He contended,<sup>147</sup> however, that centralized control of large units would be justified only if the provincial government paid the entire cost of education, and even then he had "doubts" as to "the wisdom of the scheme." The portions of the debate pertaining to the Peace River and Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Districts are dealt with in Chapters V and VI respectively. Joe Harwood stated<sup>148</sup> that "half" of the King Report had been copied from the Putnam-Weir Report. In what The Vancouver Province called<sup>149</sup> "an eloquent plea for government aid to assisted schools," Harwood said that these schools were "isolated in the hills, . . . alone in an area of about ten thousand acres." An inspector was "lucky" to visit such a school for two hours in the year. Harwood considered that it was impracticable to consolidate assisted schools! Apparently neither Harwood nor The Vancouver Province reporter was aware that there had been no assisted schools in British Columbia for three years. A. McLaughlan objected<sup>150</sup> to the critical nature of the debate; it had dealt only with one aspect of the King Report and most delegates had little knowledge of conditions







in "outlying districts." D. B. Brankin said<sup>151</sup> that when he had come to Harrison Hot Springs he had thought he was going to attend a funeral but discovered that Weir did not have "the necessary funeral expenses."

The following resolutions concerning the King Report were passed:<sup>152</sup>

. . . that . . . member Boards and Branches be urged to keep in touch with the Executive, and after digesting the King Report, present their considered reaction to such parts of the Report as they consider applicable to their areas.

. . . that this Association express to the Minister of Education its belief that any curtailment of the present system of administration of education by elected boards would be detrimental to the said system, and that this Association express its firm belief in democratic administration of education and that this administration by persons appointed by the Government would be a retrograde step.

. . . that the practice of replacing School Boards by official trustees should be limited to cases where such a course is absolutely necessary in the interests of education, and that such replacement should not be made on account only of the geographical location of the school district, nor on account of its formerly being composed of several districts.

. . . that when large administrative units are established for school administration, provision be made for an elected educational committee in each.

#### 8. Comment on the King Report in The B.C. Teacher

An editorial in The B.C. Teacher in November stated<sup>153</sup> that it was "impossible to exaggerate the importance of the information and proposals" in the King Report. In the February 1936 edition of the magazine, B. B. Thorsteinsson







stated<sup>154</sup> that rural teachers would agree with most of the report, although its recommendations were "revolutionary in nature." He praised particularly the concept of a provincial appointments board because he thought that it would end unjust dismissal practices. He paid tribute<sup>155</sup> to the provincial government, which he felt was the best qualified government in British Columbia's history "to determine the value of an educational survey," as it was "honestly endeavouring" to apply "some form of scientific procedure" to educational and other social problems. He anticipated "action" from this government. Thorsteinsson's one negative criticism<sup>156</sup> of the report at this time was its recommendation that large municipalities should be allowed to "remain outside" of the reorganized scheme. By May Thorsteinsson considered<sup>157</sup> that centralized control of "certain aspects" was "imperative" but that such matters as curriculum, textbooks, and rules and regulations should actually be decentralized. He advocated<sup>158</sup> the retention of "some form of [school] board." "To thrust aside all Canadian precedent, by the sudden abolition of school boards is to invite trouble."

#### 9. The 1936 Spring Session of the Legislature

The commissioners on school finance, George Weir and John Hart, did not table a report at the 1936 session of the provincial legislature. Indeed, there is no record that such a report was ever written. Early in the session, Dorothy Steeves took issue<sup>159</sup> with King's recommendation







that school boards should be abolished. "School boards have their sins," she declared, "but there are other ways of solving that situation than by depriving people of their representation. . . ."

Legislation passed at the session provided for "educational administrative areas" controlled by "directors of education." (See Appendix C.) Two steps were necessary in the creation of an educational administrative area: first, the Council of Public Instruction could give the designation to any district or districts under the official trusteeship of a school inspector and second, the majority of ratepayers present "at a special meeting or meetings" had to sanction the change. In each large area there was to be elected annually a school committee of five members and "in a school district forming part only of such an area," a school committee of three persons. In each case the director could appoint additional members. The committees could "advise the Director from time to time on matters pertaining to the operation, maintenance, and general welfare of the schools of the area or school district." The legislation also provided for the creation of an "Educational Administrative Areas Appointments Board" of from five to seven members appointed by the Council of Public Instruction from "persons serving or employed in the school system of the Province." The Board was to have "exclusive power to make all appointments, dismissals, and transfers of teachers employed in the school districts comprised in each educational administrative







area" except that a director might promote<sup>160</sup> teachers to principalships of small schools within his area.

The legislation's chief significance is that it made the formation of educational areas purely voluntary. The use of "districts" instead of "former districts" suggests that when a large area was formed, the districts included would not necessarily be abolished. The government may have intended in some cases to impose different mill rates in various parts of the same large area as it had already done in the Abbotsford District. (See Chapter VI.) The Educational Administrative Areas Appointments Board was given more power than King had advised; namely, the power to appoint teachers to specific positions. The Abbotsford School District Act Amendment Act, also passed at the 1936 session, is dealt with in Chapter VI.

Much of the session's time was devoted to debate on a hospital insurance bill sponsored by Weir in his capacity as provincial secretary. As several Liberals voted against the bill, its passage would have been impossible<sup>161</sup> without the support of the C.C.F. Steeves praised<sup>162</sup> Weir for his "courage, determination, and vision" in his handling of the bill.

#### 10. The 1936 B.C.S.T.A. Convention

On September 21 delegates to the B.C.S.T.A.'s thirty-second convention met at Penticton. The executive reported<sup>163</sup> that it had approved the concept of large administrative units but wanted them to be administered by local boards.







After hearing Philip Sheffield's report on the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Educational Administrative Area (See Chapter VI), Carr stated<sup>164</sup> that the director of education in a large unit should "work under or with" an elected board. J. L. Jackson, referring to the argument that democracy required the retention of school boards, said<sup>165</sup> that few trustees were actually elected; it was rare indeed for a candidate to be opposed "I think," Jackson said, "[that] we take ourselves too seriously, or else the people are satisfied with us." He said that education was a state affair and that there should be the "same system" throughout the province. H. Manning feared<sup>166</sup> that centralized control would mean control by politicians, and described a politician as "the most unmerciful being in the province." R. Stanhope said<sup>167</sup> that centralized control would result in a situation similar to that existing in France where, he claimed, the minister of education had boasted that he knew what every child in the country was learning at ten o'clock. J. Pratt said<sup>168</sup> that Weir was not a politician but "a man of vision." He said that the state had been "taking care of the individual in many ways" and now wished to "take care of the schoolchildren."

### 11. The 1937 Provincial Election

The position taken by the Liberal party concerning the administration of education in the campaign preceding the general election in June 1937, may be gauged from two of Pattullo's speeches,<sup>169</sup> one delivered in August 1936 and







the other in April 1937. In the first speech, Pattullo referred to the plank in the Liberals' 1933 election platform that ". . . there must be a general and effective review of the educational system." The review had "been going on" and "numerous changes" had already been made. Pattullo stated that ". . . education [was] necessarily a gradual process." In the second speech, Pattullo said that experiments "in school direction and management" were being conducted and that the attempt was being made "both to lessen costs and to effect a more equitable distribution of them." It is interesting to notice in these speeches the lack of sense of urgency concerning educational reorganization that was present in Pattullo's 1933 statement. In the election<sup>170</sup> the Liberals won thirty seats, the Conservatives eight, and the C.C.F. seven.

## 12. Summary

Statements made by George Weir before and immediately after the 1933 election seemed to indicate that the Liberals intended to reorganize British Columbia's educational system. Next year a Commission on School Finance was established. The revision committee to the Commission, echoing the recommendations in most of the briefs presented, urged the government to create large units and to assume a greater proportion of school costs. The technical advisor to the Commission, H. B. King, agreed but added a strong plea for







centralized control, to which the B.C.S.T.A. and the C.C.F., the official opposition, objected strongly. In 1936 the government passed legislation making units under centralized control possible on a voluntary basis. Between 1933 and 1937 the government established two large units, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.







## NOTES

1. The School, volume XXII, number 3, November, 1933, 363.
2. Text of radio address delivered by T. D. Pattullo, dated only 1933, Pattullo Papers, PABC.
3. The Vancouver Province, October 2, 1933; R. Granthem, "Some Aspects of the Socialist Movement in British Columbia" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1942), Appendix 12, 3.
4. The Vancouver Province, November 1, 1933.
5. "Expenditures upon education had been severely cut. School boards and municipal councils were in open conflict. Taxpayers' organizations were in revolt." H. B. King, "The Reorganization of Education in British Columbia," Education in the Modern World, University of Washington, autumn series, 1936, 41. Cited hereafter as King, "Reorganization."
6. King had served as special lecturer with the University of British Columbia's Department of Education since 1927. H. B. King, "The Financing of Education in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 1936), "Vita", 366. Cited hereafter as King, "Vita". Dorothy Steeves, who knew both Weir and King personally, said in an interview, "Dr. Weir got many of his ideas from Major King." Interview with Dorothy Steeves, June 9, 1970.
7. The School, volume XXII, number 5, January, 1934, 458.
8. Ibid., 459.
9. The Vancouver Province, February 1, 1934.
10. "The Municipal Taxation Commission, 1933," H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 216. The latter reference is cited hereafter as King, School Finance. The commission's report was originally published in 1934 in mimeographed form. King reproduced the following sections: "Necessity for Gradual Introduction of Reforms," "The Powers and Duties of Municipalities," "Municipal Liabilities," "Municipal Assessments," "Social Services," "Taxation of Real Property," and "Municipal Tax Levy of all Municipalities." He also included







a summary of the commission's recommendations and the representations pertaining to education made by various bodies.

11. Ibid., 215, 216.
12. Ibid., 213, 216.
13. Ibid., 215, 217.
14. Ibid., 214.
15. Ibid., 208.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 209. The commission favored taxation of real property for "beneficial" but not for "onerous" purposes. Ibid., 210. It considered educational taxes as onerous. The Vancouver Sun considered the above distinction the "key principle" of the commission. The Vancouver Sun, February 15, 1934.
18. King, School Finance, 211.
19. The Vancouver Province, March 6, 1934, 5. The Province called the speech "a ringing defence of education as the great hope of civilization."
20. Statutes of British Columbia, c.58, s.7,8,13 (1934).
21. M. A. Ormsby, British Columbia, A History (Toronto, MacMillan, 1958), 458.
22. The Vancouver Province, March 14, 1934.
23. Statutes of British Columbia, c.60 (1934).
24. The Vancouver Sun, June 12, 1934.
25. The Vancouver Province, June 12, 1934.
26. Ibid.
27. The School, volume XXII, number 5, January, 1934, 459. King stated that with a centralized system, many of the hindrances associated with local administration would be removed.
28. The Vancouver Sun, June 12, 1934.







29. Ibid., June 13, 1934.
30. Text of radio address delivered by Pattullo,  
September 12, 1934, Pattullo Papers, PABC.
31. The Vancouver Province, October 4, 1934.
32. "Report of Revision Committee," King, School Finance,  
218. Cited hereafter as "Report of  
Revision Committee."
33. Ibid., 226.
34. The School, volume XXIII, number 3, November, 1934,  
265.
35. Ibid., 265-6.
36. "Report of Revision Committee," 218-221, 227-230.
37. Ibid., 227.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 218. Other recommendations were that until the  
provincial government assume a larger share,  
local authorities be responsible for most capital  
expenditures, that a "pay-as-you-go" policy be  
followed for capital expenditures if possible,  
that the "greatest possible measure of relief" be  
granted to land-owners, and that the possibility  
of special relief for farm lands be investigated.
41. Ibid. "The obligation of municipalities and Boards of  
School Trustees are delegated responsibilities.  
The delegation of these responsibilities does not  
absolve the Province from a direct concern in the  
matter of education." "There is no uniform re-  
lationship between the taxable wealth of any com-  
munity and the number of children in such commun-  
ity to be educated. In some cases there is much  
wealth and few children; in others little wealth  
and many children."
42. The Vancouver Sun, March 4, 1935.
43. "Report of Revision Committee," 228. Exceptions were  
the briefs of the Young Liberals which recom-  
mended a poll tax, and the Vancouver Board of  
Trade which made no recommendations.







44. Ibid., 219.
45. Ibid. As an "interim measure," the committee recommended raising the income tax from 1 to 2 per cent.
46. Ibid., 228.
47. Ibid., 228-9.
48. Ibid., 229.
49. Ibid., 220.
50. Ibid., 229.
51. Ibid., 220; Reports of the Proceedings of the Thirtieth Convention of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, n.p., n.d., held at Nelson, British Columbia, September 17, 18, 19, 1934, 62. Cited hereafter as Reports of Proceedings, with place and dates of the convention.
52. "The B.C. Teachers' Federation to the Commission on School Finance," July 27, 1934, Files of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, number 1804, ABCTF.
53. The Vancouver Province, September 12, 1934. The brief was apparently using 1933 figures.
54. There were eight hundred and twenty-six school districts in June 1934 (32 city districts, 24 district municipality districts, 37 superior school districts, and 733 rural districts). British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1934 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1934), N16-N18. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.
55. The Vancouver Province, September 12, 1934, 6.
56. "Report of Revision Committee," 220.
57. Ibid., 224.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 225; F. L. Brittain, "Some Views of Administration of Public Education," Canadian School Journal, volume XIV, number 8, December, 1934, 407. Brittain said that the large unit would equalize taxation burden, provide promotions for able teachers, enable boards to place teachers effectively, provide for variations in the curriculum and assist provincial authorities in providing equalizing payments to districts.







60. "Report of Revision Committee," 225. The statements were quoted from an article by H. Inglehart, "Report of the Rural Section of the Trustees' and Ratepayers' Department and the Evening Meeting of the O.E.A.," Canadian School Journal, volume XIV, number 8, December, 1934, 427-8.
61. "Report of Revision Committee," 222-3. Connell was opposed to levying income tax on low incomes and to providing free text-books to only those pleading poverty. Anscomb and Blandy favored the imposition of high school fees and a reduction in the cost of education.
62. The Vancouver Sun, February 16, 1935.
63. Ibid., March 4, 1935.
64. Ibid.
65. The Vancouver Province, March 4, 1935.
66. The Vancouver Sun, March 6, 1935.
67. The Vancouver Province, March 5.
68. The Vancouver Sun, March 5, 1935.
69. The Vancouver Province, March 23, 1935
70. Ibid.
71. Text of an address delivered by Pattullo to British Columbia Teachers' Federation, April 24, 1934, 14, Pattullo Papers, PABC; The B.C. Teacher, volume XIV, number 10, June 1935, 11.
72. The matter of King's prolonged absence was raised at a Vancouver school board meeting by Trustee James Blackwood. The Vancouver Province, March 19, 1935.
73. King, School Finance, V.
74. The Vancouver Province, April 6, 1935.
75. It is difficult to determine what King's position was following the report's completion. In correspondence he referred to himself as "directing educational reorganization." King to All Inspectors, June 24, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD. In 1936 he said







that he was "in charge of reorganization in British Columbia and Curriculum Adviser. . . ." King, "Vita". In the same year he called himself "Director, Curricula Division, British Columbia." King, "Reorganization," 40. The writer believes that he was the technical advisor to the Minister of Education. This is the title given by Superintendent F. T. Fairey, William Plenderleith, and Harold Campbell. Report of Public Schools, 1946, MM35; Interview with William Plenderleith, June 15, 1970; Interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970.

76. The Edmonton Journal, August 8, 1935. Some trustees were provided with complimentary copies so that they could study the report before their September convention. Reports of Proceedings, Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1935, 33. Copies were made available to the public at a price of one dollar each. The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 2, October, 1935, 10.
77. King, School Finance, 7.
78. Ibid., 27-28.
79. Ibid., 28, 32-3. The approved objectives were the "Seven Cardinal Principles of Education": health, command of fundamental processes, citizenship, vocation, worthy home membership, worthy use of leisure, and character.
80. Ibid., 33-4.
81. The economists were: Roger W. Babson, J. F. Brown, T. N. Carver, Gustav Cassell, James Cunnison, R. T. Ely, T. S. Adams, M. O. Lorenz, A. A. Young, R. R. Fairchild, E. S. Furniss, N. S. Buck, Frank H. Fetter, George W. Gough, Arthur T. Hadley, R. G. Hawtrey, M. H. Hunter, G. S. Watkins, W. Stanley Jevens, A. W. Kilkaldy, and Fridrick List. Ibid., 37-40.
82. Ibid., 42.
83. Ibid., 43.
84. The text of the letter appears in ibid., 44-6.
85. Those who replied were: Viscount Halifax, Eustace Perry, Viscount Cecil, Lord Macmillan, Michael Sadler, Arthur Keith, and J. M. Keynes. King also included an excerpt from Experiment in Autobiography by H. G. Wells. Ibid., 41-58.







86. Ibid., 67-8. He gave the following percentages:  
England and Wales, 51.3; Scotland - all forms  
of public education, 49.7; Scotland - schools  
under local education authorities, 56.8;  
Northern Ireland, 82.3; New Zealand, 100;  
Australia, 100; and South Africa, 100.
87. Ibid., 69. A table showed each state's contribution.
88. Ibid., 67.
89. Ibid., 68.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid., 91.
93. Ibid., 95
94. Ibid., 81.
95. Ibid., 82.
96. Ibid., 83.
97. Ibid., 82.
98. Ibid., pp. 84-5. King said that in prosperous times  
there was a "scramble" to obtain land, and  
taxation authorities sought to appropriate  
part of its value by imposing high taxes. In  
periods of depression the land reverted to the  
municipality for the non-payment of taxes.  
However, ". . . the presence of schools creates  
a differential in land values due to their  
presence, and it is not inequitable, therefore,  
that land should bear a portion of the cost of  
education."
99. Ibid., 83.
100. Ibid., 96.
101. Ibid., 103.
102. Ibid., 113.
103. Ibid., 114.
104. Ibid.







105. This was the first major recommendation of the report. See Appendix B. Interest and sinking fund charges, incurred by municipalities, amounted to \$1,009,779 in 1933. Ibid., 116.
106. Ibid., 119-120.
107. Ibid., 119.
108. King gave the average as \$8,958,066. The average for the previous five years he gave as \$9,388,768. Ibid., 115.
109. This scheme would have increased the contribution from consolidated revenue by \$477,160 over the amount paid in the 1931-1932 school year. Ibid., 117.
110. Ibid., 119.
111. Ibid., 115. A table showed birth-rates per one thousand of the population from 1913 to 1934. Between 1913 and 1918 the rate exceeded twenty, but between 1925 and 1934 it fell below seventeen. Ibid., 177.
112. It seems clear that King did not anticipate extra revenues from either a sales tax or income tax before the introduction of "the first stage" which he hoped would take place in July 1935. Ibid., 133. The rural school areas were to be financed without the provision of extra revenue. Vide infra. The equalization fund was to be the one proposed in the Putnam-Weir Survey. Ibid., 120. The survey, however, had explained that the fund was to be financed from the proceeds of an income tax. J. H. Putnam and G. M. Weir, Survey of the School System (Victoria, King's Printer, 1925), 283-293.
113. F. D. Roosevelt had devalued the dollar the previous year by lowering the gold content. B. Rauch, The History of the New Deal, (New York, Creative Age Press, Inc., 1944), 111-4.
114. King, School Finance, 121.
115. Ibid. By law, the statements should have been submitted by July of that year.
116. These cities employed either school superintendents or municipal inspectors. (See Chapter II.) King said that these officials were similar to city school superintendents in the United States. Ibid.







117. Ibid., 122.
118. Ibid. See Also Appendix B.
119. There were eighteen provincial inspectors, two municipal inspectors, and one school superintendent.  
Report of Public Schools, 1934, N5.
120. King, School Finance, 122. See also Appendix B.
121. Ibid., 124.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid. See also Appendix B. There was no Director of Personnel at the time; it was a position recommended by King. Ibid., 125.
124. Ibid., 134.
125. Ibid., 127. See also Appendix B.
126. Ibid., 125. They should not be permitted to have "the pick of the province's teachers." Teacher appointments would be controlled by the departmental appointments committee as in the rest of the province.
127. Ibid., 133.
128. King probably considered villages to be unorganized territory. "School districts in unorganized territory are classed as rural school districts whether they are one-roomed schools in isolated districts or graded schools in communities which are really urban as in Ioco, Powell River, Ocean Falls, or Kimberley." Ibid., 130.
129. Ibid., 131-2.
130. Ibid., 12.
131. Ibid., 132.
132. Ibid., p. 134.
133. Ibid. See also Appendix B.
134. Ibid., 134.
135. In Chapter VII King said, "The Local Educational Authorities (L.E.A's) are the education committees of the county and borough councils, composed of elected councillors together with







certain co-opted members." Ibid., 59. In answering the objection concerning democracy, he said, "There is no more democratic country than Great Britain, where local School Boards are unheard of. . . ." Ibid., 122.

136. Ibid., 141-160.
137. Ibid., 161.
138. Ibid., 176.
139. Reports of Proceedings, Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1935, 4.
140. Ibid., 13.
141. Ibid., 11, 13.
142. Ibid., 13.
143. Ibid., 14-15.
144. Ibid., 15.
145. Ibid. His statement lends support to the argument that there is a strong relationship between economy and concessions to local control.
146. Ibid., 25.
147. Ibid., 26.
148. Ibid., 33.
149. The Vancouver Province, September 17, 1935.
150. Reports of Proceedings, Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1935, 33.
151. Ibid., 40.
152. Ibid., 42, 54, 56, 62.
153. The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 3, November 1935, 5.
154. Ibid., February 1936, 20,33.
155. Ibid., 20.
156. Ibid., 21.







157. Thorsteinsson, B. B., "Some Thoughts on Centralization," ibid., volume XV, number 9, May 1936, 27.
158. Ibid., 29.
159. The Victoria Times, March 3, 1936, 1.
160. ". . . Promotions within any educational administrative area, other than promotions to the principalships of superior, junior high, or high schools of four or more divisions or of elementary schools of eight or more divisions, may be made by the Director of Education for that area." See Appendix B.
161. The Vancouver Province, April 1, 1936.
162. Ibid., March 25, 1936.
163. Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 8.
164. Ibid., 37.
165. Ibid., 40.
166. Ibid., 41.
167. Ibid., 42.
168. Ibid., 43.
169. Texts of radio speeches delivered by Pattullo, August 18, 1935, and April 23, 1937, Pattullo Papers, PABC.
170. The Vancouver Province, June 3, 1936.







## CHAPTER IV

### THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA IN 1933

The first large rural administrative unit in British Columbia was located in the Peace River District. Before discussing the unit's early development between 1934 and 1937, it seems appropriate to describe the Peace River District in 1933. This description may indicate why the Department of Education chose the district as a pilot project in centralized control. Because of the few records for 1933, data for 1934 and 1935 will also be presented.

#### 1. Location and Size

The Peace River District of British Columbia is that part of the province east of the Rocky Mountains which is drained by the Peace River and its tributaries. It is roughly triangular in shape, bounded on the southwest by the Rocky Mountains, on the east by the Province of Alberta, and on the north by the fifty-seventh parallel of north latitude.<sup>1</sup> Although the area is approximately seventy-two hundred square miles, as some parts of the district were not settled before 1935, the area of the school district formed in that year was<sup>2</sup> sixty-one hundred and fifty square miles.

Because the Peace River District of British Columbia and Alberta is separated from other settled lands by the







Rockies on the southwest and by a two hundred mile stretch of rough land on the southeast, C. A. Dawson called it<sup>3</sup> a "cultural island." As a strip of rough land from twenty-five to seventy-five miles in width divides the British Columbia part of the district from the Alberta part, the entire district may also be thought of as two islands separated from each other by a narrow strait.

## 2. Topography

The District is a high plateau, relatively flat in the east and hilly in the west. The Peace River and its main tributaries flow at the bottom of deep valleys. The distance of the Peace River below the level of the plateau averages<sup>4</sup> about eight hundred feet. The river level has<sup>5</sup> an elevation of fifteen hundred feet at Hudson Hope and twelve hundred feet at the Alberta border. The Blueberry Mountains, between Pouce Coupe and Spirit River, have an elevation of three thousand feet, and Mount Wartenbe, between East Pine and Lone Prairie, has an elevation of four thousand feet.

The principal tributaries of the Peace River between the Rocky Mountains and the Alberta border are the Halfway and Beatton Rivers in the north and the Pine and Kiskatinaw Rivers in the south. The largest lakes are Charlie Lake and Cecil Lake north of the Peace, and Moberly Lake and Swan Lake to the south.







### 3. Vegetation and Soil

Most of the Peace River District of British Columbia was wooded<sup>6</sup> in 1933. The term "prairie" was used loosely. Some settlers considered a prairie as land which could be broken without being cleared and others considered it<sup>7</sup> as a stretch of flat land, forested or otherwise. Applying the first definition, only a few regions qualified: the Pouce Coupe prairie, which was<sup>8</sup> approximately twenty-five miles wide and forty miles long, Lone Prairie in the west, and portions of the so-called Montney and Rose Prairies in the north. Such regions as Sunset Prairie resembled<sup>9</sup> a prairie only inasmuch as they were relatively level.

The land of the Peace River District is<sup>10</sup> very uneven in fertility. A survey of the Alberta region made<sup>11</sup> by F. A. Bryant in 1929 showed that only 20 per cent of the land was sufficiently fertile for settlement. Generally speaking, the land west of the Kiskatinaw River was rougher and more heavily wooded than the land in the east.<sup>12</sup>

### 4. Climate

One might think that the Peace River's high latitude and location east of the Rocky Mountains would make its climate unsuitable for agriculture. Table V gives the mean daily temperatures of six stations in the Peace River District of British Columbia and of four Canadian cities, Edmonton, Prince Albert, Regina, and Winnipeg, with a continental climate. Because of the lack of reliable data for







TABLE V

MEAN DAILY TEMPERATURES FOR SIX PEACE RIVER STATIONS  
AND FOUR CANADIAN CITIES WITH A CONTINENTAL CLIMATE

(in degrees Fahrenheit)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Yr.
Beldonnell (1)	4	10	21	38	50	56	60	58	50	39	21	9	35
Beaton River (3)	-3	4	17	30	46	53	57	54	46	34	16	3	30
Dawson Creek (5)	4	10	19	35	48	55	59	57	49	39	24	10	34
Fort St. John (2)	4	11	22	38	51	56	61	59	51	40	22	9	35
Hudson Hope (3)	8	12	22	38	50	56	60	59	49	40	22	7	35
Pouceat Coupe (4)	-4	12	17	32	49	55	58	57	48	39	25	11	34
Edmonton (1)	7	11	22	39	52	58	63	60	51	41	24	13	37
Prince Albert (1)	-3	3	15	36	51	58	65	62	51	39	19	5	33
Regina (1)	-2	5	17	38	52	59	67	64	53	41	22	10	35
Winnipeg (1)	0	4	18	38	52	62	68	66	55	43	23	9	35

\* L. Forstad, T. M. Lord, A. J. Green, H. J. Hortie, Soil Survey of the Peace River Area in British Columbia (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1965), 17. All other data from: Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Temperature and Precipitation Tables for British Columbia, Volume I (Toronto, 1967), 4, 5, 12, 15, 18; Tables for Prairie Provinces, Volume III (ibid.), 5, 34, 35, 51.

- (1) Based on records of from twenty-five to thirty years between 1931-1960.
- (2) Based on records of ten years adjusted to the standard normal period 1931-1960.
- (3) Based on records from ten to twenty-four years between 1931-1960. No adjustment factor was used.
- (4) Based on records of fourteen years.
- (5) Based on records of less than ten years. Adjustments were made when extremes unduly influenced the averages.







settlements south of the Peace River, data are given for only two stations in that region, Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe. The data have other weaknesses: the Beaton River meteorological station is over thirty miles north of the settled region of the 1930's; the Baldonnel station is only four miles from the Fort St. John Station; and some of the statistics are based upon fewer than ten years. Nevertheless, a reasonable conclusion would seem to be that the mean temperatures of the Peace River stations are similar to those of the four cities except that they are lower for the months of June, July, August, and September.

Table VI shows the length of the frost free season for the ten stations. As the growing season for most of the selected strains of spring wheat commonly grown in Western Canada in the Thirties was<sup>13</sup> one hundred and ten days, one might conclude that the Peace District was unsuitable for growing wheat, and indeed, growing wheat as a single crop would have been disastrous. However, the periods free of killing frost (above 28° F.) are considerably longer than the periods free of frost (above 30°). For example, at Beaverlodge, Alberta, a station relatively typical of the entire Peace River District, the average periods free of frost and of killing frost are<sup>14</sup> one hundred and one and one hundred and thirty-two days respectively. The British Columbia Department of Agriculture in 1928 said<sup>15</sup> that wheat, barley, oats, and vegetables could be grown in most parts of the District. The Department claimed<sup>16</sup> that the long hours







TABLE VI

THE FROST FREE SEASON FOR SIX PEACE RIVER STATIONS AND  
FOUR CANADIAN CITIES WITH A CONTINENTAL CLIMATE

	Number of Years	Average Frost Free Period (days)	Frost Free Seasons Extremes on Record	
			Shortest	Longest
Baldonnel	30	99	62	138
Beatton River	16	70	50	111
Dawson Creek	11	79	46	101
Fort St. John	19	111	62	141
Hudson Hope	14	62	12	104
Pouce <sup>*</sup> Coups	14	66	27	89
Edmonton	23	123	88	156
Prince Albert	18	93	66	110
Regina	30	97	46	133
Winnipeg	23	115	82	145

<sup>\*</sup>Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Climatic Summaries for Selected Meteorological Stations in Canada, Volume III (Toronto, 1956), 25.

Other statistics from Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Climatic Normals, Volume VI (Toronto, 1968), 1, 4, 6, 7.







of sunshine and the low altitude compensated for the short growing season. "Delay in seeding because of poor machinery," it continued, "has caused most of the frost damage." A recent authority states<sup>17</sup> that the District is "well suited to cool-season crops."

There are no reliable precipitation data for any stations south of the Peace River. A comparison of the other four stations with Edmonton, Prince Albert, Regina, and Winnipeg (Table VII) shows that the total precipitation and its distribution throughout the year are similar for the two groups. Ward, Brooks, and Conner said<sup>18</sup> that precipitation was "abundant" considering the high latitude. More recently, A. C. Carder stated<sup>19</sup> that precipitation, being well distributed throughout the growing season, favored agriculture.

## 5. Transportation

The only railway serving the district was the Northern Alberta Railway, which was extended<sup>20</sup> to Dawson Creek in January 1931. There were no direct road or rail connections with the rest of British Columbia. Most of the populated part of the district was served by roads but none was<sup>21</sup> an all-weather road. The many "cut-banks" in the district posed problems for road builders; it required approximately three miles of switch-backs to get from the plateau down to the Peace River, and there were similar difficulties in crossing the Pine and Kiskatinaw Rivers.







TABLE VII

PRECIPITATION FOR FIVE PEACE RIVER STATIONS AND FOUR  
CANADIAN CITIES WITH A CONTINENTAL CLIMATE\*

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Yr.
Baldon- nel (1)	1.0	1.0	.9	.8	1.4	2.6	2.6	2.0	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.1	17.3
Beatton River (2)	.9	1.1	.9	1.0	1.7	2.4	2.8	1.7	1.0	1.0	.9	1.0	16.4
Fort St. John (2)	1.2	1.2	1.0	.9	1.2	2.4	2.5	2.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	17.4
Hudson Hope (2)	.8	.7	.9	.9	1.5	2.8	2.5	1.9	2.3	1.2	1.3	.9	17.8
Edmon- ton (1)	.9	.8	.8	1.1	1.8	3.1	3.3	2.5	1.3	.9	.9	1.0	18.6
Prince Albert (1)	.7	.6	.7	1.0	1.6	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.4	.9	1.0	.9	15.7
Regina (1)	.8	.7	.8	.8	1.6	3.3	2.2	2.0	1.3	.7	.8	.7	15.5
Winni- peg (1)	1.0	.8	1.1	1.2	2.0	3.2	2.7	2.8	2.2	1.4	1.1	.9	20.3

\*Sources: Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Temperature and Precipitation Tables for British Columbia, Volume I (Toronto, 1967), 4, 5, 12, 15, 18; Tables for Prairie Provinces, Volume III, (*ibid.*)

- (1) Based on records of from twenty-five to thirty years between 1931-1960.
- (2) Based on records of from twenty to twenty-five years. As amounts were rounded to the nearest tenth, totals are slightly inconsistent with the sums of the monthly figures.







Horse-drawn wagons and sleighs were widely used. C. A. Dawson's survey of fifty-three families in the Dawson Creek area in 1929 revealed<sup>22</sup> that only 26 per cent owned automobiles. Settlers used<sup>23</sup> the horse-drawn automobile, facetiously called the "Bennett-buggy" after the Canadian prime minister during the depression years from 1930 to 1935.

The Peace River was navigable from Hudson Hope to beyond Fort Vermilion, Alberta, and, in the absence of good roads in the northern part of the district, was used<sup>24</sup> for transportation. Some idea of the state of the roads north and west of Fort St. John may be gained from a study of the ill-fated Bedaux expedition. In July 1934 Charles E. Bedaux arrived in Fort St. John from Edmonton with five Citroen half-track cars, intending<sup>25</sup> to drive overland to Sifton Pass. The trucks reached Montney in six hours and then proceeded westward. The diary of the expedition describes<sup>26</sup> its progress:

Continued straight west along graded mud road for three miles and then along wagon trail cut by relief labour - no grading. Road very wet. Get through all mud holes successfully. At creek 4 ft deep and 20 ft wide, with steep mud banks, Bedaux tries to force car across, the bridge being washed out. Car wedges in creek at 40° angle, effort made to cross. No. 2 Car on floating bridge, car tilts and nearly upsets. On our arrival we fell two trees and re-lay bridge timber. Haul two cars over by cable.

The trucks took eleven days to travel fifty-eight miles from Fort St. John and were finally abandoned<sup>27</sup> at the junction of the Graham and Halfway Rivers.

Travelling by horseback was probably the most reliable form of transportation in the Peace River District in 1933







and the only means in the outlying regions which did not have roads. As late as 1937 the children of Upper Cutbank had not seen <sup>28</sup> an automobile.

## 6. Settlement

Because the Peace River Block, a three and a half million acre tract of land in British Columbia, was controlled<sup>29</sup> by the federal government from 1907 to 1930, it was surveyed in the same manner as the Prairie Provinces; that is, into townships six miles square divided into thirty-six sections. Some of the lands adjacent to the Peace River Block, opened to settlement by the British Columbia government, were also surveyed<sup>30</sup> into townships.

Although settlement had begun even before the federal government's initial survey of 1912, most of the settlers in 1933 had arrived<sup>31</sup> after 1928. The government agent at Pouce Coupe estimated<sup>32</sup> the population of the Peace River District of British Columbia as four thousand in 1928. The 1931 census gave<sup>33</sup> the population as almost seven thousand. The school inspector estimated<sup>34</sup> the population to be thirteen thousand in 1936. J. M. Imrie, writing in 1931, said:<sup>35</sup>

Settlers have been flocking in as to no other district in Canada since pre-war days. New areas have been opened up and fully homesteaded in a single season. . . . One thousand new homesteads have been filed on in the Peace River Block these last two and a half years.

According to Miss F. H. E. Hasell, the rush of settlers was caused<sup>36</sup> by a Peace River farmer's winning the first prize at Chicago in 1926 for the world's best wheat and oats. More







favorable freight rates, drought conditions on the southern prairies, the construction of the Edmonton-MacLennan highway, and reports that the railway was to be extended to the Peace River Block also contributed<sup>37</sup> to increased settlement.

Most of the new arrivals settled to the north of Fort St. John and to the west of Dawson Creek. Emmett Smith, an early settler in the northern region, says<sup>38</sup> that he and most of the other settlers already had farms in southern Saskatchewan and filed claims on homesteads in the Peace River for speculative purposes. They were, he stated, "suit-case farmers" who hoped to obtain clear title on their lands by spending the required number of months there and by "proving them up." However, after enduring the drought conditions of the southern prairies, these settlers decided to live on their holdings in the Peace on a year-round basis.

In the buoyant year of 1929 Dawson together with several assistants carried out a pioneer sociological study based on visits to almost four hundred farms in the Peace River District of Alberta and British Columbia. He classified<sup>39</sup> the farms according to zones:

Zone I - areas settled earliest through which the railway and main highway pass.

Zone II - the transitional area remote from the railway but near the main highway.

Zone III - the recently settled fringe remote from both highway and railway.

All except one of the British Columbia farmers visited lived within twenty miles of the large centre of Rolla and were all classified under Zone II. Farmers interviewed for Zone I lived near Peace River Town and Grande Prairie and those for







Zone III lived in northern Alberta near Battle River. Data concerning all of the zones are of interest to one studying the British Columbia part of the district as, with the extension of the railway to Dawson Creek, there would be farms in the region in each of them.

Bachelor households comprised<sup>40</sup> 31 per cent of the farms. In 1931 the number of males per hundred females was<sup>41</sup> one hundred and eighty-five compared with one hundred and twenty-one for the province of Alberta in the same year. The houses in Zone I averaged<sup>42</sup> 4.2. rooms; in Zone II, 3.4 rooms; and in Zone III, 2.3 rooms.

The ethnic origin of the settlers in the entire Peace River District and in the Rolla region respectively are shown in Table VIII, and the birthplaces of settlers in the entire region are shown in Table IX. Few of the settlers had come directly from the countries of their birth but had gradually moved<sup>43</sup> westward across the continent. In the older settlements, the people were<sup>44</sup> of mainly British, Scandinavian, and German origin, and on the fringe were of mainly British and Central European origin. All of the settlers interviewed considered false the statement<sup>45</sup> of William Plenderleith, school inspector, that some regions were entirely of a single nationality, with the exception of Sunset Prairie which was mainly settled by British war veterans in 1919. However, settlers of a given ethnic origin were present in greater proportions in some communities than in others. Parkland, for example, had<sup>46</sup> a large number of Czechs and Slavs, and Clayhurst had many Ukrainians. The proportion of Dawson's







TABLE VIII

ETHNIC ORIGINS OF SETTLERS IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT  
(ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA) AND IN  
THE ROLLA REGION, 1931<sup>\*</sup>

	Entire Peace River District	Rolla
British - - - -	50.2%	59.3%
Scandinavian - - - -	13.3	12.2
Northern and Eastern Europe - - - -	13.8	16.9
Central and Southern Europe - - - -	13.9	4.9
Others (mostly Indians) -	8.7	6.7

<sup>\*</sup>Source: C. A. Dawson, The Settlement of the Peace River Country: A Study of a Pioneer Era (Toronto, Macmillan, 1934), 66-7.

TABLE IX

BIRTHPLACES OF SETTLERS IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT  
(ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA), 1931<sup>\*</sup>

Canada - - - -	35%
British Isles - - - -	21
United States - - - -	20
Scandinavia - - - -	11
Northern and Western Europe - - - -	7
Central and Southern Europe - - - -	6

<sup>\*</sup>Source: Dawson, 68.







sample born on farms was<sup>47</sup> 81.6 per cent. Because of patches of poor soil and the quarter-section homesteads, homes tended<sup>48</sup> to be far apart.

## 7. Communities

Dawson classifies<sup>49</sup> business centres as follows:

- a. large elementary centres with a population of one hundred to three hundred, from twenty-six to fifty-two businesses, and with from \$200,000 to \$500,000 retail business turnover.
- b. elementary centres with a population of from fifty to one hundred and fifty, from twelve to thirty-four business units, and with from \$100,000 to \$200,000 retail business turnover.
- c. cross-road centres, a population under fifty and a retail business turnover less than \$100,000.

Although at the time of his survey, C. A. Dawson considered Pouce Coupe to be the only large elementary centre, by 1933 Dawson Creek would undoubtedly also qualify.<sup>50</sup> Rolla was classified as an elementary centre and Fort St. John would probably also qualify.<sup>51</sup> Such communities as Progress, Groundbirch, Sunset Prairie, Doe River, Kilkerran, Arras, Montney, and North Pine, were<sup>52</sup> cross-road centres. Many of the centres shown on the maps on the succeeding pages had only post offices.

The first community activity was the establishment of a school, a topic which will be dealt with in detail in the next section. Many communities had<sup>53</sup> active Farmers' Institutes and Women's Institutes. Socials and dances were common.<sup>54</sup> Pouce Coupe had an annual winter carnival and Dawson Creek had an annual stampede.<sup>55</sup> The larger centres had such















Fig. 6

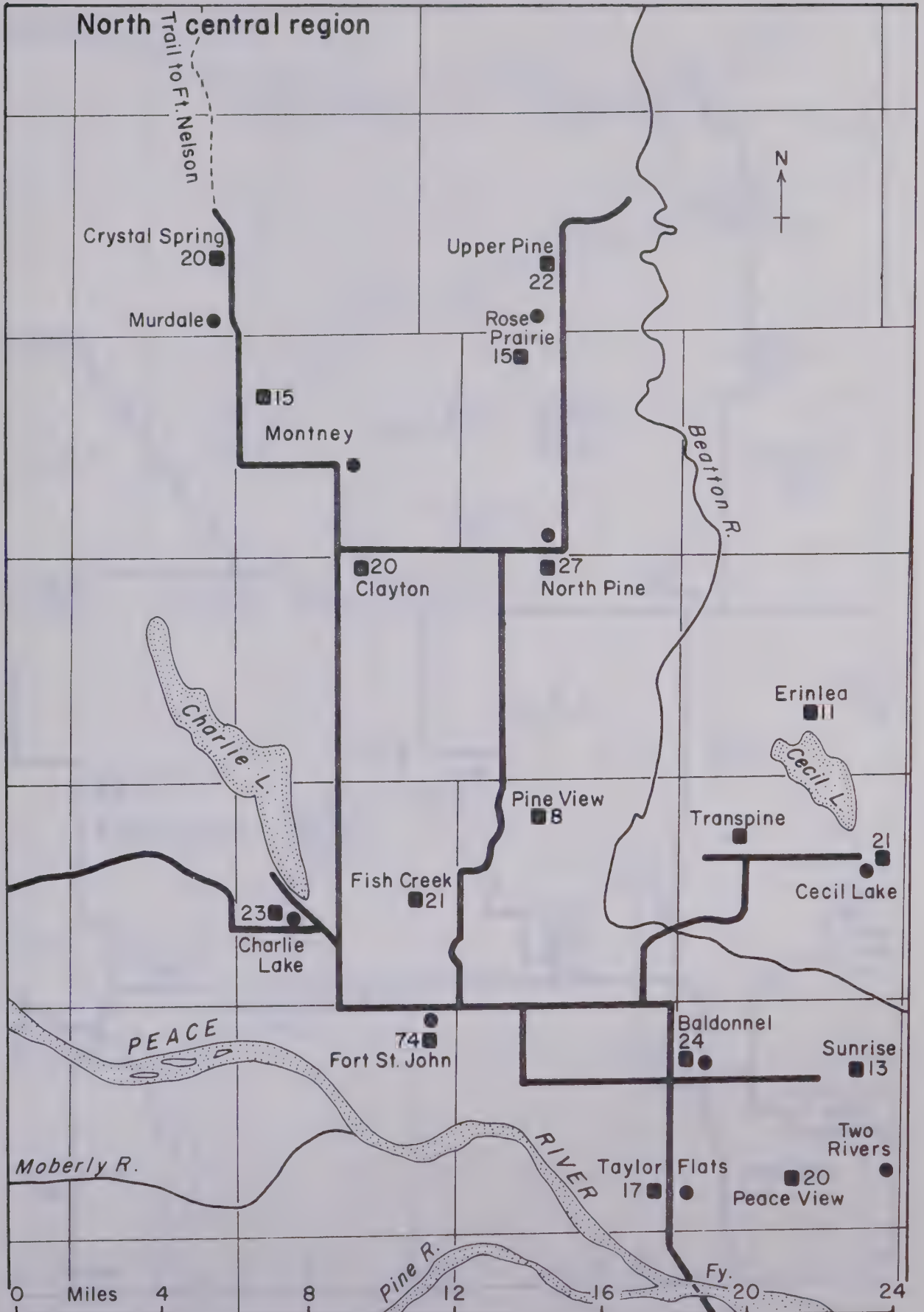
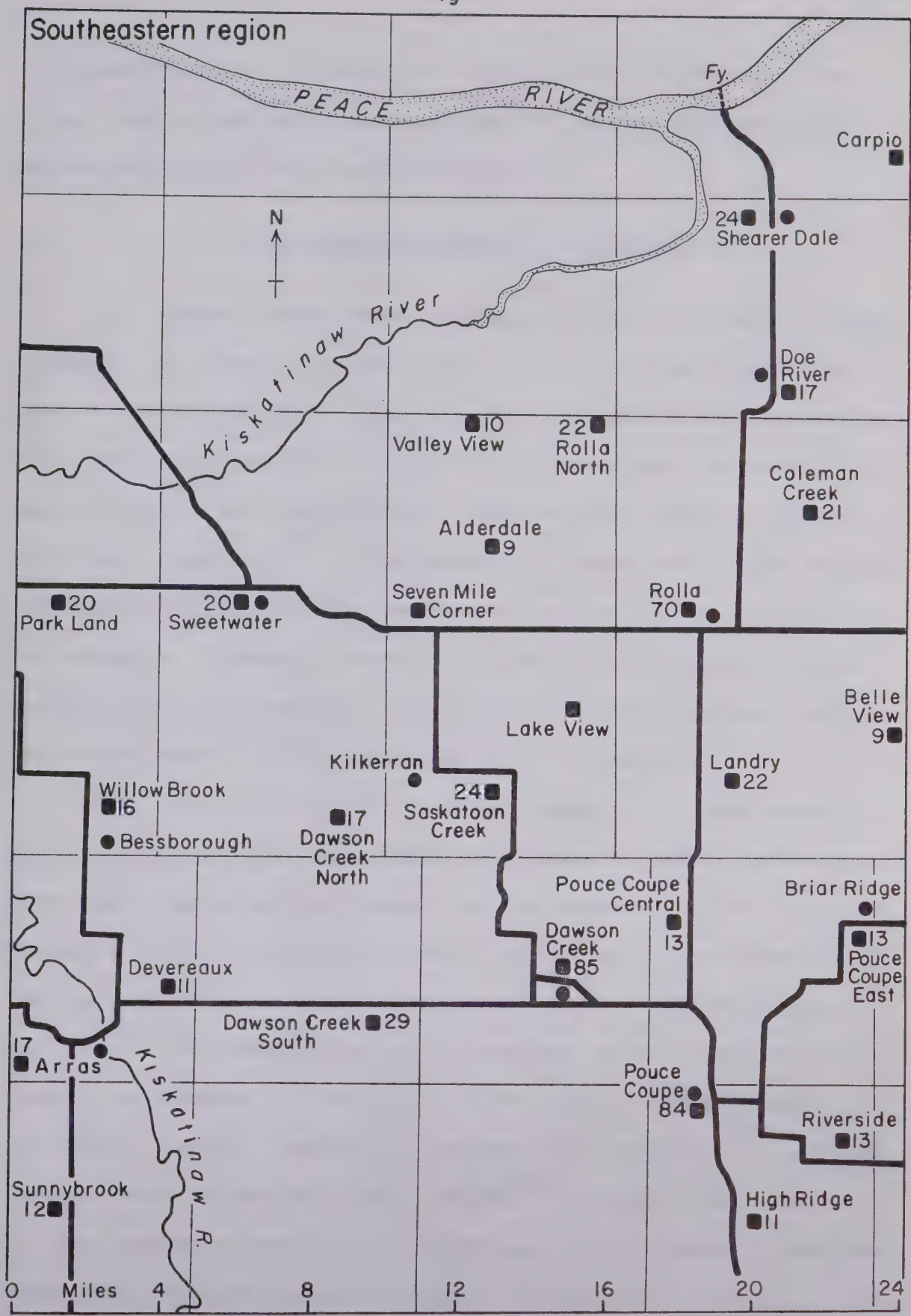








Fig. 7









organizations as literary and dramatic societies, bridge clubs, and organized sports teams.<sup>56</sup> Political meetings before elections were well-attended.<sup>57</sup>

#### 8. The Establishment of Schools

All those interviewed considered that the early establishment of schools in newly-settled districts revealed a desire for children to have at least an elementary education. There was an appreciable minority of settlers, however, who, once a school was established, did not send their children to school regularly.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, there were other reasons for establishing schools besides a desire for an education; for example, financial benefits from road-building and the boarding of the teacher, appreciation of land values, and the enhancement of the prestige of the founders.<sup>59</sup>

The first step in the establishment of a new school was to petition the Department of Education with the assurance that there were at least ten children of school age resident within three miles who would attend the school. The inspector of schools then carried out an investigation and made a recommendation as to whether or not the petition should be granted. The site of the school often created problems. Harold Campbell, who was the inspector of schools in the Peace River in 1928, favored<sup>60</sup> locating the school in the centre of what would eventually be an area of settlement, but the petitioners wanted to locate the school in the centre of the existing settled region. Because Campbell







could see the likelihood of districts becoming smaller as they were re-defined and as settlement expanded, he advocated<sup>61</sup> that "some central body" be placed in charge of the location of schools. Campbell's suggestion was not acted upon, probably because it was politically inexpedient. According to William Plenderleith,<sup>62</sup> in theory each township was to have one school. Just how far practice diverged from theory is revealed by a study of Figs. 5, 6, and 7. Five townships had two schools each, two had three schools each, and one had four schools.

After the establishment of a new school had been approved, the local residents erected the building. Sometimes the first classes were held in a private home pending completion of the building; sometimes voluntary workers erected the building; and sometimes the founders borrowed money to pay for its erection.<sup>63</sup> H. J. Murphy, who successfully petitioned for a school at Devereaux in 1930, spent<sup>64</sup> \$900 before the site had been cleared or any logs prepared. His request that the customary government grant of \$200 for doors, windows, blackboards, and other such materials as could not be obtained locally,<sup>65</sup> be increased, was denied. He then complained to the Superintendent of Education, S. J. Willis, that the inspector had not defined the boundaries of the district. The inspector, T. W. Hall, explained<sup>66</sup> to the superintendent that Murphy wanted the boundaries defined because only then would he be able "to tax his neighbours for a school which existed only in [Murphy's] imagination." Hall lent Murphy \$50.00 and was considering making a







further loan until Willis advised him not to.<sup>67</sup> Murphy meanwhile had held socials to raise several hundred dollars and had made sufficient progress with the building for the inspector to agree<sup>68</sup> to define the boundaries. Before the school was finished, some building materials were stolen but were later recovered.<sup>69</sup> This story is told at some length to show the problems that could be associated with the opening of a new school and to illustrate the truth of Dawson's statement<sup>70</sup> that the establishment of new schools required a great amount of the inspector's time. The latter problem was especially acute before 1932 when the inspector had to travel<sup>71</sup> almost a thousand miles by rail every time he visited the Peace from his headquarters in Kamloops.

Dawson's statement<sup>72</sup> that the first school house was unpretentious is probably true but may be misleading. The original school houses which the writer saw in 1970 were all well constructed and spacious, although it seems reasonable to suppose that only the better schools have been preserved.<sup>73</sup> (See Appendix D.) The school inspector, W. R. MacLeod, in his official report in the spring of 1933, said<sup>74</sup> that the schools were "a credit to their communities." Most of them, he said were large, well-lighted, and well-constructed. In a memorandum in June, however, he complained<sup>75</sup> that the schools were of "the crudest possible structure with four bare walls and no ceiling."

The following description of a school appeared<sup>76</sup> in a publication circulated in 1935 to teachers interested in going to the Peace River District. The school had been







established two years earlier.

### Valley View School

#### Description of School:

Log School, twenty feet by thirty feet by eight feet.  
Icehouse, ten feet by eight feet by six feet.  
Ten pupils (eight boys, two girls) enrolled as follows:

Grade I - 2  
IV - 2  
VI - 3  
VIII - 3

The children in this district know very little of the outside world, most of them never having been outside this district.<sup>77</sup> They have one and one half miles to walk to school. This makes attendance irregular in very cold or wet weather.

#### Description of District:

This district is quite heavily wooded, only four hundred acres of land being cultivated. There are fourteen families living in the district, only three of whom have children of school age. The nearest post office is Rolla about twelve miles from the Valley View district. The nearest railway centre is at Dawson Creek, about thirty miles from the district.

#### Boarding Facilities:

The living conditions in this district are poor. Board and room, which includes washing, costs twenty dollars per month and more should not be paid.

There is a cabin about one mile from the school in which the teacher could batch.

#### Type of Teacher:

A male teacher is required for this district. One who has "roughed" it a little would find it easier to adjust himself. At present an inexperienced teacher could handle this school.

#### General:

This is rather an isolated district as the roads<sup>78</sup> are always in very poor condition. The majority of the settlers are foreigners with very little initiative. All the homesteaders in this district are dependent on the Government for monthly relief assistance.







## 9. The Economic Situation

In 1933 most of the settlers in the Peace River District were subsistence farmers, subsidized by government relief. According to the auditing staff of the Pouce Coupe Bank of Commerce, three hundred cattle and fifteen hundred hogs were shipped<sup>79</sup> from Pouce Coupe in 1933. There is no record of grain shipments for 1933 but the figure for 1935 was one hundred and seventy thousand bushels. These amounts are low for a centre which, according to the auditing staff, served a rural population of almost twenty-five hundred. In many regions remote from the railway, no produce at all was marketed.<sup>80</sup> The auditing staff estimated that in 1933 wheat yielded twenty bushels to the acre and oats, forty bushels. Dawson's estimate<sup>81</sup> for the entire Peace River District in 1929 were identical. The 1932 crops suffered from extreme drought, and 1933 crops from a severe early frost.<sup>82</sup>

Dawson found<sup>83</sup> that in his sample groups the investments in the average farms in the well-settled, transitional, and fringe areas were \$15,072, \$11,366, and \$4,163 respectively. In Zones II and III livestock represented<sup>84</sup> a large part of the investment. The percentages of acreage used for wheat in the three zones in 1929 were<sup>85</sup> 49, 29, and 13 respectively. Most acreage was devoted<sup>86</sup> to growing feed crops. In 1931 the average farm had sixty-eight acres<sup>87</sup> cleared and had five horses, five cattle, five swine, and thirty-five poultry. Settlers supplemented their food supply







by hunting, and those in the fringe area by trapping, also.<sup>88</sup>

Vera Kelsey estimated<sup>89</sup> that between 1931 and 1936 85 per cent of the farmers received relief assistance from the provincial government. In some communities, every family was "on relief."<sup>90</sup> There was<sup>91</sup> a serious shortage of seed grain and feed in the spring of 1933. Writing in The Vancouver Province on March 10, 1934, Emily Crawford, a resident of the Peace River, said<sup>92</sup> that no one was hungry but that there was no money. "We have trained (sic) our resources to the saturation point," she stated.

Speaking to the provincial legislature in 1936 about a recent visit to the Peace River, Harold Winch, M.L.A., declared<sup>93</sup> that the district was no longer "the land of opportunity." He added<sup>94</sup> that the roads were in "a terrible condition," and many of the people had "not eaten decent fruit for three years." "When I visited there," he continued,<sup>95</sup> "I gave one girl an orange. She asked her mother to cook it so she could eat it. I gave a little boy a banana and he didn't know what to do with it. They had never seen such things before."

As water was difficult to obtain in most parts of the Peace River District, for watering stock farmers often dug<sup>96</sup> shallow reservoirs, called "scoop-outs" or "dug-outs," to catch surface water, and for drinking, melted ice which was stored in ice-houses. Wells were extremely expensive, often having to be sunk<sup>97</sup> to a depth of over two hundred feet.







In 1929 Dawson found<sup>98</sup> only three wells in Rolla.

The lack of water not only limited the stock that could be raised but also made it difficult for settlers to maintain a reasonable standard of health. Parts of an article by Evelyn Penrose in Blackwood's Magazine which concerned her visit to the district in 1931 were quoted<sup>99</sup> in the Peace River Block News. She claimed that settlers actually drank "the filthy stuff" from scoop-outs and seepage wells. A bath, she stated, was "an unheard of luxury" in the Peace River. J. W. Abbott replied<sup>100</sup> that settlers had "faced, and [were] facing conditions and difficulties ne'er dreamt of in the philosophy of these detractors." Although Penrose had made a critical comment<sup>101</sup> concerning the settlers, it seems to this writer that the difficult conditions were in her view the chief cause of the problems of which she spoke.

Some other primitive conditions in the lives of the settlers are illustrated in an anecdote told<sup>102</sup> by Plenderleith. Plenderleith and the medical health officer, J. S. Cull, were visiting an outlying region and stayed over-night at a settler's home. Plenderleith and Cull and some members of the settler's family slept on the floor of the living room. During the night Plenderleith was awakened by a splashing sound. Someone lit a lantern and lifted a pack rat from a pail of milk which was sitting by the fire. The next morning on his way to the privy he saw a dog urinating on a haunch of deer that was lying in the snow. At breakfast, Cull wondered why Plenderleith did not want any milk on his







porridge or any of the deer meat that was being served.

#### 10. Community Frictions

Teachers found it difficult not to become involved in local disputes. Even accepting an invitation to dinner from a member of a faction gave the appearance of partisanship. Sometimes the factions developed<sup>103</sup> because of a disparity of income among the settlers. Settlers at a distance from the school often resented<sup>104</sup> those who were closer. At High Ridge, the settlers on one side of a cutbank were bitter<sup>105</sup> that the school was on the opposite side. Factions sometimes developed because of differing opinions concerning a teacher's competence. (See next section.) There is some slight evidence of ethnic factionalism. Following the formation of a large unit in the Peace, it was difficult for M. S. Morell, the official trustee, to secure the services of a correspondent at Parkland. Joseph Chemielewski volunteered, and then dismissed<sup>106</sup> the teacher. In the absence of Plenderleith, the new official trustee, his secretary, Eva Morell, explained<sup>107</sup> to Chemielewski that he had exceeded his powers but did not reinstate the teacher. D. Ballantyne charged<sup>108</sup> that Chemielewski had discharged the teacher so that he could hire a teacher who would give instruction in the Czech language. "Under the [School] Board system," said Ballantyne, "we kept the foreign element where they belong." There is also some evidence of friction between whites and half-breeds. (See next section.)







# 11. Attitudes Toward Teachers and Schools

The writer found little evidence of friction arising from the fact that most teachers had come from Vancouver and Victoria. L. D. Codona told<sup>109</sup> the South Peace River Teachers' Annual Convention at Rolla in 1935, that teachers should "get down to the common level of the people" in order "to understand the conditions of pioneer life." According to the Peace River Block News, the teachers replied<sup>110</sup> that they felt they should "set a higher standard." Archie MacIntyre of Devereaux in a letter to the News said<sup>111</sup> that environment had "a lot to do with people's attitude toward life." He stated that it was "very easy to have high and noble ideals when one [was] drawing a good fat salary," and complained of the "audacity" of those who expected "to be paid by those without money."

A teacher who exercised authority in such matters as deciding what organizations could use the school could arouse opposition. Nancy Cougar of North Pine wrote<sup>112</sup> in 1935: ". . . In our way of seeing things we are unable to make discrimination between public servants, whether teachers, clerks or Janitors (sic), we feel that they are public servants and not governors."

One might expect resentment caused by the teacher's comparatively high income. According to Mrs. Jean Gething, who taught many years in the Peace River, such feeling developed<sup>113</sup> only when the teacher spent her money conspicuously.







As teachers were usually charged from \$20.00 to \$30.00 a month for board and room, there was considerable competition to provide this service and often-times considerable resentment toward the teacher by those whose accommodation was rejected. Sometimes the facilities provided were very poor. Some had to stay<sup>114</sup> at farms which had no privies, and some were not given private rooms. A Miss MacLaughlin at East Pine stayed<sup>115</sup> at a house which was a stopping-over place for transients; on one occasion there were twenty people in the house at one time. One teacher at Sunset Prairie was expected<sup>116</sup> by her landlord to sleep in a tent. Sometimes a school board member threatened<sup>117</sup> a teacher with dismissal if the teacher did not board with him. In one case mentioned<sup>118</sup> by Plenderleith, the secretary of a school made himself "offensive" to a teacher if she did not "comply with his wishes in personal matters" because she had refused to board with him.

Judging from the correspondence of the official trustee, many settlers were very concerned about the morality of the teacher, although in the opinion of John Close,<sup>119</sup> a pioneer settler at Willow Valley, immorality was merely a convenient charge against a teacher when there was resentment over the teacher's boarding arrangements. E. D. Edwards, correspondent for Erinlea after the formation of the large unit, complained<sup>120</sup> to Plenderleith that the teacher was setting a poor moral example. Either dismiss her, Edwards threatened, or the advisory board would







resign. Hearing that Edwards had not discussed the matter with the other board members, Plenderleith dismissed<sup>121</sup> Edwards. Edwards then sent his son to another school as he considered<sup>122</sup> that anyone who entertained "two or three beau's (sic)" was "not fit to tutor [his] children."

A woman complained<sup>123</sup> that the local female teacher was "running the country with [a] bunch of breeds." The teacher did not have the same excuse for such conduct as teachers in lonely districts because she lived "right on the highway." There is no record of a reply from the official trustee. However, the teacher remained at the school for another year and then married a local resident.

Another female teacher boarded<sup>124</sup> with the district secretary, a single man, for almost three years. Plenderleith instructed<sup>125</sup> the secretary to dismiss the teacher but the board voted two to one to retain her. When the board member who had supported the secretary moved away, Plenderleith appointed an opponent. However, the annual school meeting defeated<sup>126</sup> the other opponent on the board, and elected a supporter of the teacher. The teacher by this time had married the secretary, and was informed<sup>127</sup> by Plenderleith the next year that she was doing very satisfactory work.

Sometimes a feud began in a community as the result of animosity toward the person who was the school janitor. Although the teacher, Thelma Crosson, and the public health nurse, Nancy Dunn, had no complaints concerning the Willow







Valley janitor, W. H. Cowley, and although medical officer J. Beckwith considered<sup>128</sup> him the best janitor in the district, several settlers wanted him discharged. The Women's Institute asked<sup>129</sup> for his dismissal because he had painted the toilet seats a few hours before their dance in the school house. The feud between Cowley and those opposed to him became so serious that Cowley sometimes threatened his opponents with a gun, and according to John Close, once wounded<sup>130</sup> one of them.

The settlers considered the school a community building and, generally speaking, felt that it should be used for meetings and dances. Evaline de Clauncey Meade, a middle-aged English teacher at North Pine, objected to having the school so used. They wanted the school open "all the time," she complained.<sup>131</sup> She had sufficient influence with the school's advisory committee to cause a request from the Farmers' Unity League for the use of the school to be refused.<sup>132</sup> Meade informed<sup>133</sup> Plenderleith that a certain resident had never forgiven her for changing her boarding place, and that the Farmers' Unity League<sup>134</sup> were "red hot communists." Fearing that two other settlers were planning to burn the school down, she thought that a fire-break around the school would be advisable. Plenderleith supported Meade, stating to Willis that "the better element" was in favor of Meade, and approving the fire-guard.<sup>135</sup> When the advisory committee rejected the plan for a fire-guard, Meade stated<sup>136</sup> that she would have one built at her own expense.







Using schools for dances caused greater difficulties than using them for meetings. Nancy Dunn, a public health nurse, reported<sup>137</sup> that one hundred and fifty persons had been present at a dance at the Doe River school and had consumed a great quantity of "moonshine." The Parkland advisory board passed<sup>138</sup> a motion making it "unlawful . . . to use profane language before children from intoxicators (sic) from Sunrise Valley and Sweetwater districts," and unlawful to vomit near the door of the school.

Some school board members, having learned that the provincial government paid most of the costs of operating the school, used<sup>139</sup> their positions for their own profit. The janitor's position and the contracts for supplying wood and ice at exorbitant prices were in some cases divided among the board members. In one case<sup>140</sup> a salary of \$25.00 was voted to the secretary, a salary of \$7.00 to the janitor, who was the secretary's daughter, and a special salary of \$5.00 to the secretary's wife, and contracts for supplying wood and ice were given to the sons of board members. The total allowance for secretaries in the Peace River District amounted <sup>141</sup> to over \$1600 for the year 1932 to 1933.

An examination of provisions for children's health and comfort tends to substantiate Dawson's conclusion<sup>142</sup> that fringe areas neglected their schools. One teacher who told<sup>143</sup> the children to pile their overcoats, rubbers, and lunch buckets on the floor, was re-engaged the following year. School boards usually ignored<sup>144</sup> recommendations of the medical







health officer. MacLeod complained<sup>145</sup> that ". . . in almost every case drinking water was supplied by melting snow in the winter" and from "unsanitary" scoop-outs in the summer. Dunn reported<sup>146</sup> that the children at Willow Valley were drinking from "a dirty green hole," that the children at Springhill were drinking from a common pail, and that the water being drunk at Parkland was "putrid." As windows had no mosquito netting, it was usually impossible during the mosquito season to see across the classroom because of the smoke from the smudges that were used to keep the mosquitoes out.<sup>147</sup> The medical health officer discovered<sup>148</sup> an open privy pit at North Dawson School.

As the public health service was paid for partly by a local assessment, districts often voted against providing it. The annual school meeting at Devereaux in July 1933 voted against renewing the services of a public health nurse. In a letter to the Peace River Block News, Helen Green, the most recent teacher at Devereaux, explained<sup>149</sup> that the services would have cost \$17.50 and that there were a hundred and thirty ratepayers in the district. Devereaux, she claimed,<sup>150</sup> had a "superabundance of morons." Archie McIntyre implied<sup>151</sup> that ratepayers could not afford the service. Bachelors who controlled nearby Sunnybrook district also rejected<sup>152</sup> the health services.

Some of these incidents may be explained by school boards' setting very limited objectives. It is not surprising that people living at a relatively primitive level with







little experience in any other type of life did not envisage school conditions far in advance of their own living conditions. Procrastination could account for many of the weaknesses in school management. Dunn reported<sup>153</sup> in January 1935 that not a single school visited had its ice stored. She said that the lack of concern over "when things [were] done [was] one of the diseases of the country." When a man who had been given a contract to build a barn did no work on it for two months, M. S. Morell, official trustee, complained. The man replied in effect: "You said, 'As soon as possible,' not, 'Right away.'"

Schools were affected by the prevailing economic conditions. Children often arrived at school in the winter crying because they were so poorly clothed and many were reported to suffer from serious malnutrition.<sup>154</sup> At Devereaux, Dunn said 26 per cent of the children were underweight and most of them drank no milk.

Incompetence of some trustees also contributed to the poor state of school affairs. In some cases financial accounts were poorly kept.<sup>155</sup> As mentioned in Chapter II, H. B. King stated<sup>156</sup> that in December 1934, one hundred and sixty-one out of six hundred and sixty-three one-room rural school districts in British Columbia had not submitted the annual financial report and auditor's report due the previous July. He added that many of the reports submitted were extremely inaccurate. It is assumed that some of the Peace River Districts were probably among the offenders.







The teachers of the time wrote little to indicate whether or not they were happy. Although Oscar Palsson, a high school student at Sunnybrook in 1933, says<sup>157</sup> that teachers "were glad to get jobs" during the depression, there is little to indicate that the teachers in the Peace River were anxious to hold their jobs. Of sixty-seven teachers who closed their school house doors behind them at the end of June 1933, only twenty-eight opened the same doors in September. (See Table X.) Of those who left, undoubtedly some were dismissed and others obtained positions elsewhere in the province. Six moved to schools elsewhere in the Peace. According to Billy West,<sup>158</sup> a teacher at East Pouce Coupe in 1933, approximately nine of them married settlers in the Peace River. Some would consider that these were very fortunate. This was not West's view.<sup>159</sup> They married, he said, because they had become "despondent." He stated that their husbands were penniless and implied that they had little in common with their brides. He concluded: ". . . The girls are now buried up in that district, broken in health and spirit. . . ." Two of them later drowned, and West believed that they might have committed suicide.

## 12. Conclusion

In this writer's opinion, the Peace River District of British Columbia in 1933 was isolated, impoverished, and over-settled. Government schemes had opened lands for







TABLE X

TEACHERS IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT, 1932-1934<sup>\*</sup>

School	1932 - 1933	1933 - 1934
Alderlea	Miss D. L. Cox	Miss D. L. Cox
Arras	Miss J. M. Ferguson	Miss J. M. Ferguson
Baldonnel	Miss D. Haslam	P. D. Douglas
Bear Flat	A. Holland	School Closed
Belle View	Miss J. E. Teeple	Miss G. R. Grant
Bon Accord	Miss E. Redhead	Miss E. Redhead
Carpio	Miss G. M. Haggerty	Miss M. W. Hall
Cecil Lake	Mrs. L. M. Framst	Mrs. L. M. Framst
Charlie Lake	Miss J. P. Edward	Miss J. P. Edward
Clayhurst	Miss E. G. Morton	Miss E. G. Morton
Clayton	J. G. Thomson	J. G. Thomson
Coleman Creek	Mrs. C. E. Clarke	Miss L. C. Steeves
Crystal Spring	Mrs. J. Gross	E. C. Latimer
Dawson Creek North	Miss M. W. Hall	Miss C. Partridge
Dawson Creek South	Miss M. G. Green	J. L. Marion
Devereaux	Miss H. Green	F. G. Dalzell
Doe Creek	Mrs. M. D. Lean	Mrs. M. D. Lean
Erinlea	No school established	Miss M. F. Neal
Fish Creek	Miss B. K. Bernard	Miss J. M. McIntyre
Forfar	J. M. Downard	A. H. Bachman
Groundbirch	Miss J. A. McRae	Miss M. Anderson
Hays	Miss C. M. Menzies	Miss C. M. Menzies
High Ridge	Miss A. M. W. Johnstone	C. D. Ovans
Hudson Hope	Miss J. G. Cameron	Mrs. J. V. Gething
Kelly Lake	C. A. Ward	C. A. Ward
Landry	Miss M. F. Beddard	C. D. Gaitskell
Lone Prairie	F. G. Dalzell	Miss L. Gething
Montney	R. A. Hill	R. A. Hill
North Pine	Miss G. L. Stipe	Miss E. A. de C. Meade
Parkland	R. E. Somers	Miss M. V. Thompson
Peace View	Miss P. Moon	Miss P. Moon
Pine View	Miss J. M. McIntyre	Miss D. R. Evans
Pouce Coupe Central	Miss F. C. Reece	Miss F. C. Reece
Pouce Coupe East	Miss V. E. Maki	Miss N. A. Carter
Progress	Miss V. A. Somers	Miss V. A. Somers
Riverside	Miss D. Auld	Miss B. K. Bernard
Rolla North	Miss E. B. Bates	Miss L. Lansdowne

<sup>\*</sup>Source: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1933-1934 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1933-1934).







<u>School</u>	<u>1932 - 1933</u>	<u>1933 - 1934</u>
Rose Prairie	Miss E. A. de C. Meade	Miss G. Mulholland
Saskatoon Creek	Miss G. E. Hoffman	Miss C. E. Ferguson
Shearerdale	Miss M. E. F. Hill	Miss M. E. F. Hill
Springhill	D. Clark	Miss J. L. Hennington
Sunnybrook	Mrs. J. V. Gething	Miss E. A. Weir
Sunrise	Miss A. H. Murray	Miss J. G. Cameron
Sunrise Valley	Miss M. A. Cody-Johnson	D. J. Dewar
Sunset Prairie	V. H. Jones	V. H. Jones
Swan Lake	Miss L. Gething	Miss E. L. Windrem
Swan Lake North	Miss H. F. Howie	Miss J. Monteith
Sweetwater	Miss Z. Purdy	Miss R. Baxter
Taylor Flats	Miss M. J. Ryder	Miss M. J. Ryder
Transpine	Mrs. D. MacDougall	School closed
Tupper Creek	Miss T. Paynter	Miss D. J. Parrot
Tuscolla Mountain	Miss E. L. Windrem	Miss G. E. Gerhart
Upper Cutbank	R. J. Downey	R. J. Downey
Upper Pine	Miss D. A. Tilton	S. Sciotti
Valley View	No school established	D. Thomson
Willow Brook	W. Sutherland	W. Sutherland
Willow Vale	Miss H. Gerhart	Miss H. Gerhart

Graded Schools

Dawson Creek	S. G. Graham	S. G. Graham
	Miss L. P. Fenton	Miss A. A. Parsell
	Miss E. L. Buchanan	Miss E. L. Buchanan
Fort St. John	R. G. Sprinkling	R. G. Sprinkling
	Miss J. I. Rutherford	Miss J. I. Rutherford
	Miss L. A. Petter	Miss L. A. Petter
Pouce Coupe	Miss E. M. Magee	Miss P. E. Garjer
	L. P. Macrae	L. P. Macrae
	Miss C. Bertrand	Miss M. A. Cody-Johnson
Rolla	E. F. Hurt	E. F. Hurt
	H. A. Thicke	H. A. Thicke
	Miss E. L. MacKenzie	Miss E. L. MacKenzie







settlement before there was the means of transportation and communication for the settlers to earn a living from their lands even had times been prosperous. Marginal and sub-marginal lands were made available.<sup>160</sup> Squatters took up<sup>161</sup> land in outlying areas and were later provided with schools. It would have been advisable to have settled an entire district in which the soil was good before opening<sup>162</sup> a neighboring district for settlement. As a result of the practice of permitting scattered settlements, school sites were<sup>163</sup> small, inadequate, expensive, and heavily subsidized by the government.

Probably the government was correct to consider taking over management of the schools in the Peace River District. In Dawson's words,<sup>164</sup> ". . . the results [of local control were] often detrimental to all concerned, but particularly to the children." Although residents of the Peace, in this writer's opinion, had shown themselves incapable of either supporting or managing their schools, there were undoubtedly other areas in British Columbia with similar conditions. The Peace, however, lent itself to management as a large unit because the entire district had<sup>165</sup> similar problems, a single industry, and well defined boundaries.

It was obvious that gaining public approval of a more centralized scheme would be difficult. Dawson said<sup>166</sup> that large units of administration offered a solution to many problems but that few people were willing to pay the price of losing their autonomy. One encouraging aspect of the







situation in the Peace was that most of the school boards had organized recently and were not strongly entrenched. On the other hand, the multiplicity of districts gave many people a vested interest in the small unit system of school administration. The district's isolated position from the rest of British Columbia, and its distance from Victoria, caused the settlers to suspect projects originating there. (See Chapter VI.)

From the point of view of establishing a "demonstration area" whose example would be followed by other parts of the province, it was important that the plan should work well in the district chosen. Yet the very factors likely to make for success could prevent the rest of the province from accepting the solution used in the Peace River. People west of the Rockies would be likely to say that the drastic remedies necessitated by the Peace's isolation, poverty, and lack of development were not necessary or desirable elsewhere.







## NOTES

1. The region north of the fifty-seventh parallel is in the watershed of the Liard River.
2. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1936 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1936), H60. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.
3. C. A. Dawson, The Settlement of the Peace River Country: A Study of a Pioneer Era (Toronto, Macmillan, 1934), 16.
4. Canada, Department of the Interior, National Development Bureau (F. H. Kitto), The Peace River Country of Canada: Its Resources and Opportunities (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1930), 21.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 19.
7. Interview with John Close, July 24, 1970.
8. W. F. Robertson, "The Provincial Meteorologist Reports, 1906," G. E. Bowes (ed.), Peace River Chronicles, (Vancouver, Prescott, 1963), 235. "The Prairie is almost free from brush and is covered with a luxuriant growth of wild hay; it is well watered, being dotted with small lakes and by numerous small streams, which are so near the surface that they have not cut very deeply into the prairie."
9. John Close remarked facetiously that the Sunset "Prairie" was the land between one tree and the next one. Interview with John Close.
10. Dawson, 25.
11. Kitto, 25.
12. Ibid., 95.
13. R. de C. Ward, C. F. Brooks, and A. J. Conner, The Climates of North America (Berlin, Verlag von Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1938), J.360.
14. Canada, Department of Agriculture Publication 1224 (A. C. Carder), Climate of the Upper Peace River Region (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1965), 5, 9. "Recent studies have shown that, except for variations, the climate throughout the region varies little from Beaverlodge."







15. British Columbia, Bureau of Information, Bulletin Number 25, Peace River Country (Victoria, King's Printer, 1928), 6-7.
16. "In the midsummer weeks there is practically no night."  
Ibid.
17. Carder, 3.
18. Ward, Brooks, and Conner, J86.
19. Carder, 3.
20. M. E. Coutts, Dawson Creek, Past and Present (Edmonton, Hanley Press, n.d.), 118.
21. Interview with William Plenderleith, June 15, 1970.
22. Dawson, 145.
23. Mrs. James McNight to M. S. Morell, November 27, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
24. Kitto, 62, 64; Bowes, 458.
25. Bowes, 439.
26. F. C. Swannell, "A Diary of the Bedaux Expedition, 1934," Bowes, 450.
27. Bowes, 452, 454.
28. Interview with Oscar Palsson, June 20, 1970.
29. Bowes, 13; B. B. Wellmon, "A History of the Peace River Country of Western Canada" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1965), 96.
30. There was no consistency in this matter. Lone Prairie and areas west of Hudson Hope and Moberly Lake, all outside of the Block, were surveyed into sections. East Pine and Little Prairie, which were within the Block but which were not surveyed until jurisdiction of the Block was returned to provincial control, were surveyed into lots of varying shapes and sizes as was usually done in the part of British Columbia west of the Rockies. British Columbia, Department of Lands, Pre-Emptor's Map, Peace River Block, 1936.
31. Bowes, 13; J. M. Imrie, "The Valley of the Peace, 1931," Bowes, 437.







32. Ibid.
33. The 1931 census said that there were 1911 people north of the Peace and 4774 to the south. Corresponding 1921 figures were 181 and 1513. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, Volume 2, (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1936), 106.
34. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H57.
35. Imrie, 437.
36. F. H. E. Hasell, "A Missionary Visits, 1928," Bowes, 416. The farmer was Herman Tulle of Wembley, Alberta.
37. Dawson, 43; L. Forstad, F. M. Lord, A. J. Green, and H. J. Hortie, Soil Survey of the Peace River Area in British Columbia (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1965), 11.
38. Interview with Emmett Smith, July 23, 1970.
39. Dawson, 97.
40. Ibid., 122.
41. Ibid., 62.
42. Ibid., 142.
43. Ibid., 68.
44. Ibid.
45. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H57; Coutts, 39.
46. Ibid., 81, 89.
47. Dawson, 80.
48. Ibid., 26.
49. Ibid., 157.
50. Ibid. The selection of Dawson Creek rather than Pouce Coupe as the railway terminus caused the former to become the leading commercial centre of the region. It is significant that the Peace River Block News changed its location in 1932 from Rolla to Dawson Creek. Coutts, 96.







51. Dawson, 157. Dawson did not consider in any detail the region in British Columbia north of the Peace River.
52. Ibid.; Coutts, 39, 77-78, 86; Kitto, 95; Interview with Emmett Smith.
53. Peace River Block News, January 17, 1933. The membership of some of the farmers' institutes was given as follows: Sweetwater - 52, Alderdale - 38, Stewart Flats - 102, Rolla - 52, North Bear Mountain - 48, Sunnybrook - 20, Shearerdale - 25, Progress - 34, Sunrise Valley - 17, Riverside - 16, West Saskatoon - 30. It was mentioned that the following also had institutes: Sunset Prairie, Hays, Fort St. John, Doe River, Willow Valley, Lone Prairie, South Pine, North Pine, Baldonnel, and Devereaux.
54. Ibid., May 9, 1933.
55. Ibid., February 14, 1933, ibid., July 11, 1933.
56. Ibid., May 9, 1933.
57. In the 1933 provincial election campaign, the candidate of the Non-Partisan Movement, Clive Planta, addressed many "mass meetings." Ibid., April 11, 1933. Such groups as the United Farmers of British Columbia, the People's Party, and the Farmer Labor Association, all held meetings but united in time to support the C.C.F. candidate, M. C. Simmons. Ibid., April 11, 1933; ibid., April 25, 1933. W. A. Watson, the Liberal candidate, was supported by T. D. Pattullo, who visited the Peace River District July 11 to 14. Ibid., July 18. In the election in November, Planta polled nine hundred and fifty-seven votes, Simmons eight hundred votes, and Watson seven hundred and forty-nine votes. Ibid., November 7.
58. There are many letters in the official trustee's correspondence informing parents of the regulations concerning compulsory school attendance.
59. A. J. Henley to W. A. Plenderleith re the Alderdale school, April 12, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD; T. W. Hall to S. J. Willis re the Devereaux school, December 10, 1930, ibid.
60. Interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970.







61. Interview with Harold Campbell; Report of Public Schools, 1929, R29.
62. Interview with William Plenderleith.
63. Hall to Willis, December 10, 1930, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
64. Ibid.
65. W. A. Plenderleith to A. E. Meek re proposed Summer Hill School, March 20, 1935, ibid.
66. Hall to Willis, December 10, 1930 and March 25, 1931, ibid.
67. Willis to Hall, April 15, 1931, ibid.
68. Hall to Willis, March 25, 1931, ibid.
69. W. R. MacLeod to Willis, November 10, 1932, ibid.
70. Dawson, 249.
71. The first resident inspector in the Peace River District was W. R. MacLeod, who had his headquarters at Pouce Coupe.
72. Ibid., 197.
73. The schoolhouse at Upper Cutbank was very poorly built according to Oscar Palsson, who taught there for two years. The logs were of uneven size and had such large spaces between them that the pupils often had to replace the chinking. Interview with Oscar Palsson.
74. Report of Public Schools, 1933, M37.
75. Ibid., 1936, H57.
76. W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in the Reorganization and Administration of a Rural Inspectoral Unit in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1937), "A Page from the Peace River School Directory," Appendix, 146.
77. In this report "district" usually seems to mean the area surrounding the school. In this case, however, it seems to mean the Peace River District.







78. The pre-emptor's map of 1936 showed no roads within six miles. See Fig. 7. It is assumed that there were several trails in the Peace River District not shown on the map.
79. Record of Auditing Staff, Alberta Division, Pouce Coupe Bank of Commerce. The writer is indebted to Adolph Ikert for this reference, cited hereafter as "Record of Auditing Staff."
80. Interview with John Close.
81. Dawson, 80.
82. "Record of Auditing Staff"; Peace River Block News, December 26, 1933. The "Record" states that on September 1, 1933, there were up to twelve degrees of frost in the Pouce Coupe region.
83. Dawson, 105.
84. Ibid., 107.
85. Ibid., 101.
86. In 1931 acreage devoted to various crops was: field crops, 56,952; wheat, 33,783; oats, 25,620; barley, 1271; rye, 196; flax, 150; forage, 1866. Forstad, Lord, Green, and Hortie, 12.
87. Averages were computed from information in ibid.
88. Interview with Jean Gething, July 23, 1970; Coutts, 77.
89. V. Kelsey, "Dawson Creek and Fort St. John, 1957," Bowes, 498.
90. Interview with Oscar Palsson.
91. Peace River Block News, February 14, 1933; May 2, 1933.
92. The Vancouver Province, March 10, 1934.
93. Peace River Block News, May 27, 1936.
94. Quoted by W. A. Plenderleith, "Conditions in the Peace River Inspectorate before Consolidation," The School, volume XXV, number 3, November, 1936, 188.
95. The Vancouver Province, March 10, 1934.
96. Dawson, 141.







97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Peace River Block News, January 12, 1933.
100. Ibid., 1-2.
101. She was quoted as saying that the settlers were "too ignorant or too lazy" to filter the water.  
Ibid.
102. Interview with William Plenderleith.
103. Interview with Jean Gething.
104. Often a settler donated land for a school site so that his children would not have to travel far to school. Examples of settlers following this practice are: E. Smith at North Pine, H. J. Murphy at Devereaux, and J. Palmer at East Pine. Interviews with Emmett Smith and Jean Gething; Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
105. Interview with Charles Ovans, June 9, 1970.
106. Plenderleith to J. Chemielewski, June 4, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD;  
Eva Morell to Chemielewski, July 23, 1935, ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. D. Ballantyne to Plenderleith, August 7, 1935, ibid.
109. Peace River Block News, November 1, 1935.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., August 8, 1933.
112. Nancy Cowger to Plenderleith, March 4, 1935,  
Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
113. Interview with Jean Gething.
114. Billy West to Weir, July 18, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
115. Nancy Dunn to Plenderleith, February 1, 1935, ibid.
116. Interview with John Close.
117. Interview with William Plenderleith.







118. W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in Centralization," H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 105.  
Cited hereafter as Plenderleith, "An Experiment."
119. Interview with John Close.
120. E. D. Edwards to Plenderleith, February 13, 1936,  
Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
121. R. A. Cuthbert to Plenderleith, February 24, 1936;  
ibid.; Plenderleith to Edwards, February 26,  
ibid.
122. Edwards to Plenderleith, March 19, 1936, ibid.
123. Mrs. James McKnight to Morell, November 30, 1934, ibid.
124. Plenderleith to Willis, May 10, 1935, ibid.
125. Plenderleith to G. Teather, May 22, 1935, ibid.
126. E. Martens to Morell, July 14, 1935, ibid.
127. Plenderleith to Mrs. Teather, May 19, 1936, ibid.
128. Thelma Crosson to Morell, February 13, 1935, ibid.;  
Dunn to Plenderleith, March 4, 1935, ibid.;  
J. Beckwith to Plenderleith, February 28,  
1935, ibid.
129. Women's Institute to Morell, February 9, 1935, ibid.
130. Interview with John Close. Cowley was discharged on  
October 15, 1935 for opening a letter from the  
official trustee to the correspondent and for  
showing the letter to other people. Plender-  
leith to Cowley, October 15, 1935, Correspond-  
ence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
131. Evaline de Clauncy Meade to Morell, January 15, 1935,  
ibid.
132. Meade to Plenderleith, March 26, 1935, ibid.
133. Meade to Plenderleith, April 10, 1935, ibid.
134. The Farmers' Unity League was organized in Saskatchewan  
in December 1930. Composed of militant left-  
wingers, ". . . it was dedicated to the estab-  
lishment of a farmers' and workers' government."







D. Spafford, "The Left Wing, 1921-1931,"  
N. Ward and D. Spafford (ed.), Politics in  
Saskatchewan (Toronto, Longmans, 1968), 54.

135. Plenderleith to Willis, April 18, 1935 and May 10, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
136. Meade to Plenderleith, May 22, 1935, ibid.
137. Dunn to J. S. Cull, May 1, 1936, ibid.
138. Buran to A. S. Towell, April 10, 1937, ibid.
139. Interview with William Plenderleith.
140. Plenderleith, "An Experiment," 106.
141. Ibid., 108.
142. Dawson, 205.
143. Dunn to Plenderleith, February 16, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
144. Plenderleith, "An Experiment," 105.
145. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H59.
146. Dunn to Morell, September 21, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD; Dunn to Plenderleith, February 16, 1935, ibid.
147. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H57.
148. Plenderleith to Peter Hyndman, June 2, 1936, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
149. Peace River Block News, July 25, 1933.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid., August 8, 1933.
152. Interview with Jean Gething; Dunn to Plenderleith, February 16, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD. They also forced Gething, their teacher in 1932 and 1933, to resign because they wanted an unmarried teacher. In another district three bachelors were elected to the school board "with instructions to create as much discord as possible so that the school would be closed." Plenderleith, "An Experiment," 105.







153. Dunn to Plenderleith, January 17, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
154. West to Weir, July 18, 1934, ibid; Dunn to Plenderleith, January 17, 1935, ibid.
155. Plenderleith, "An Experiment," 106.
156. King, 121.
157. Interview with Oscar Palsson.
158. West to Weir, July 18, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
159. Ibid.
160. Dawson mentions other reasons besides poor transportation and poor soil for the low standard of living of many families in 1929; namely, the unsuitability of many families as settlers, their lack of capital, the sparse population, and the meagre social organization. Dawson, 252.
161. The establishment of schools at Upper Cutbank and East Pine is an example of this practice.
162. This is also Dawson's opinion. Ibid., 255.
163. Ibid., 249-250.
164. Ibid., 206.
165. ". . . Since there were a large number of school districts in the same geographical setting presenting similar problems in local administration, it appeared that the possibility of working out a satisfactory solution offered greater chance of success than in localities where conditions were more complicated." J. F. K. English, "The Peace River Educational Administrative Unit" (mimeographed, Pouce Coupe, 1942), 7.
166. Dawson, 206.







## CHAPTER V

### THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1933-1937

In 1933 an inspector's report on the Peace River District stated that the management of schools was unsatisfactory. Next year the government united thirty-nine school districts in the area into a large unit containing "four experimental groups" under an official trustee. The second phase of the reorganization began in 1935 when practically the whole district came under a single administration. Letters to the school inspector, the superintendent of education, the minister of education, and the Peace River Block News reveal that local opposition was violent. The inspector, William Plenderleith, defended the plan in letters to his superiors and to the News and in speeches and at public meetings. He also encouraged teachers to write letters to the minister of education and articles for The B.C. Teacher. In 1937 ratepayers of the District were permitted to vote on the large unit.

#### 1. The First Phase of the Large Unit

##### The Establishment of the Unit

In June 1933 Inspector W. R. MacLeod sent a memorandum to S. J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, in which he







criticized inexperienced and transient teachers and the inadequacies of heating, ventilation, cloakrooms, toilet facilities, equipment, drinking water, and janitor services.

MacLeod died<sup>1</sup> in April 1934 and was replaced by William Plenderleith. Willis informed<sup>2</sup> Plenderleith that the Department of Education favored the establishment of large units and instructed him to report on the advisability of a large unit in the Peace River District. Upon arriving, Plenderleith discovered that six of the districts in the Peace were under official trusteeships. He suggested<sup>3</sup> to Willis that M. S. Morell, the government agent at Pouce Coupe, who was already the official trustee of three districts, be assigned the other three trusteeships. Morell was notified<sup>4</sup> of his appointment on July 5.

On July 12 Morell recommended<sup>5</sup> to Willis that there be one official trustee for all the one-room schools of the Peace River because teachers were unhappy with local conditions and with the lack of opportunities for promotion and increases in salary. He said that 60 per cent of the teachers left after only one year in the district. Morell added that the teachers were very much in favor of the proposed change. Willis replied<sup>6</sup> that the suggestion was not new; the Department of Education had considered it "on many occasions" and "was aware of the benefits" that would result. He assured Morell that the matter would be considered in the near future.

At the same time Billy West, a teacher, complained<sup>7</sup> to







George Weir, the Minister of Education, that schooling in the Peace River District was too expensive for the size of the district and for the number of children. He outlined<sup>8</sup> a plan of consolidation which would have closed fourteen schools. H. B. King, recently-named technical advisor to the commission on educational finance, asked Morell to comment on West's letter, and was informed that consolidation in the Peace was "difficult if not impossible" because of mud and snow conditions.<sup>9</sup>

In September Plenderleith informed<sup>10</sup> Willis that in forty-four selected districts only five had fully qualified boards. In the remaining districts at least two out of three trustees were delinquent<sup>11</sup> in paying taxes. Plenderleith said<sup>12</sup> that the boards were ineffective, and suggested that all of the thirty-nine districts be united into a single unit. He submitted a diagram (See Fig. 8) to illustrate his plan for the administration of the new district.

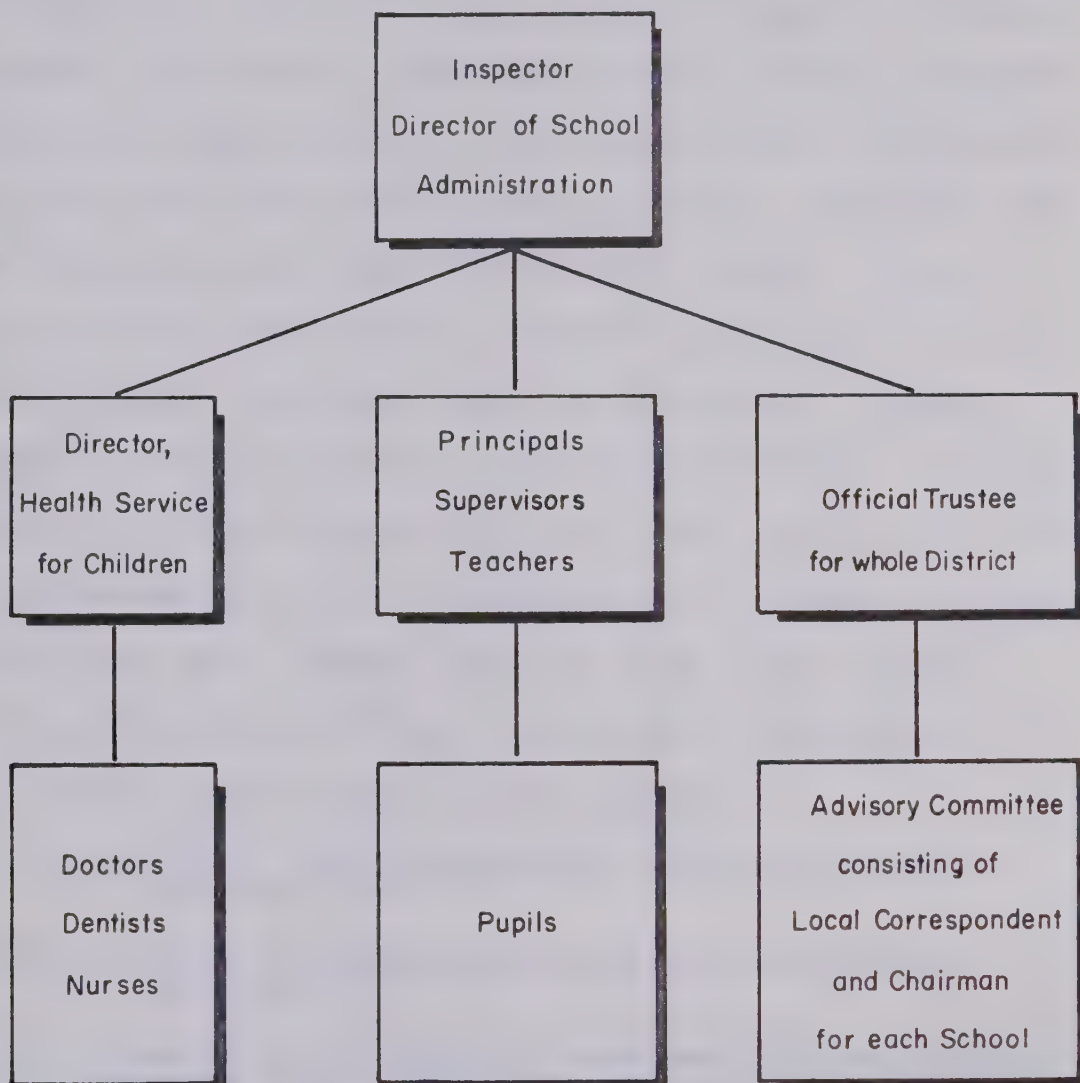
Willis welcomed<sup>13</sup> the opportunity to put into effect the "long cherished plan" of establishing a large unit. He believed<sup>14</sup> that ". . . the formation of larger administrative areas in rural districts would prove quite as desirable as the creation of rural municipality school districts in 1906 had proven." He said that because of the conditions in the Peace River, the Department of Education favored the plan of control by an Official Trustee. Willis suggested<sup>15</sup> that the thirty-nine districts be divided into several experimental groups "each containing seven or eight schools."







Fig.8  
PLAN FOR ADMINISTRATION OF A RURAL INSPECTORAL UNIT\*



\* Submitted by W. A. Plenderleith to Superintendent of Education, September 1934. H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 107.







On September 26 Plenderleith recommended<sup>16</sup> the following experimental districts: the South Peace Rural School District containing nine former districts and having Pouce Coupe as its centre; the North Peace Rural School District containing six former districts and having Fort St. John as its centre; the Central Peace Rural School District containing fourteen former districts and having Dawson Creek as its centre; and East Peace Rural School District containing ten former districts and having Rolla as its centre. The Council of Public Instruction created<sup>17</sup> the first three of these on October 5 and the fourth on October 25. Morell was made<sup>18</sup> official trustee of all the districts. As the four districts were administered as a unit except that each had a different mill rate, reference will be made in future to "the large unit" rather than "the four large units."

Plenderleith gave<sup>19</sup> the following as his reasons for being opposed to the small district system:

- (a) conflict among ratepayers, health authorities and teachers,
- (b) lack of residents qualified for the office of trustee,
- (c) lack of familiarity of trustees with provisions of the Public Schools Act and fear of enforcing the Act,
- (d) tyrannical control of some trustees over teachers,
- (e) great differences in tax rates in contiguous districts (in the thirty-nine districts the mill rate varied from 1.6 to 25),
- (f) lack of qualified district secretaries,
- (g) disparities of teachers' salaries and lack of means for promoting teachers,







- (h) unequal treatment of education in contiguous districts as some school boards were interested only in low mill rates.

Some of these weaknesses of the small unit were commented upon in the previous chapter. An illustration that Plenderleith later gave<sup>20</sup> of non-uniformity in salaries was of two teachers: one with considerable experience and doing excellent work teaching a class of twenty-four pupils and receiving the minimum salary; the other inexperienced and doing only fair work, teaching eight pupils and receiving a much higher salary.

On October 18 Morell wrote<sup>21</sup> to every school board secretary explaining the plan and asking him to assume the advisory position of correspondent. On October 26 Plenderleith and Morell spoke<sup>22</sup> to the teachers assembled at Dawson Creek for the first convention of the South Peace Teachers' Association. Plenderleith explained that the scheme had been recommended by the British Columbia Trustees' Association at Nelson earlier that year and that ratepayers would still be able to vote at annual school meetings on all matters affecting their schools. He added that as the Department of Education paid approximately 85 per cent of the teachers' salaries, the power of appointment, transfer, and dismissal of teachers would remain solely in the hands of the Department.

Plenderleith's reference to the decision of the Trustees' Convention is misleading. The convention had recommended<sup>23</sup> larger units of administration in some cases







but had not recommended the abolition of school boards. The reference to school meetings also requires clarification; such meetings would in future be able only to offer advice to the official trustee concerning school management. The large share of the teachers' salaries paid by the government, which was used many times to justify centralized control, does not reveal accurately the allocation of the financial burden. In 1933, for example, the government paid <sup>24</sup> 63 per cent of total school costs in the Peace River District.

Morell told the teachers that the large unit was not "a new departure on the part of the Department of Education"; other official trusteeships had worked so well that they were "being extended." Like Plenderleith, Morell mentioned the school trustees' resolution favoring a reduction in the number of school districts. He stated that replies had already been received from 50 per cent of the former boards assuring co-operation. The official trustee, Morell continued, must have the final say in expenditures. He referred to dissatisfaction of teachers, specifically mentioning disparities of salaries in contiguous districts, and resentments caused by the extent of the school boards' power, which he implied had been disproportionate to their small financial contribution. He stated that eventually the entire Peace River District would have a common assessment.

Morell's denial that the plan was a "new departure"







is questionable. It is true that there had been official trusteeships for many years but they were now being used to bring something new into existence, that is, the large unit. Moreover, even if thirty-nine individual trusteeships had been established simultaneously, it is likely that there would have been opposition. Furthermore, as Morell himself intimated, the plan was being introduced with a view to incorporating all the small school districts in the region in the new scheme whether their trustees were qualified or not.

The next day, following the reading of a letter concerning large units, from Henry Charlesworth, general secretary of the B.C.T.F., the teachers passed<sup>25</sup> the following resolution:

Be it resolved that this Convention approve the plan for a large administrative unit for education in the Peace River Block, and that we as teachers support the movement toward the inclusion of all within the Inspectorate of the Peace River District of British Columbia.

### Protests against the Large Unit

Several residents wrote letters to department officials objecting to the change. A. M. Petch of Valley View asked<sup>26</sup> Morell why the superintendent of education had taken the control out of the people's hands. J. P. Henderson, of the defunct South Dawson School District, protested<sup>27</sup> to Willis concerning the "arbitrary method"







in which the scheme had been "foisted" upon the people. He claimed that in his district there were few people on relief although some settlers were temporarily unable to pay their taxes. Henderson objected most of all to being asked to act as correspondent, a position which he regarded as that of "unofficial informer." If he accepted the position, he said, he would be popularly regarded as a "stool pigeon to an official bureaucracy at Pouce Coupe." In several districts there was an unwillingness of former trustees to act as correspondents. Sometimes other citizens were appointed as correspondents, and at a few schools where no one accepted the position the teachers acted<sup>28</sup> in that capacity. H. G. Hadland, secretary of Baldonnel School District, which was near Fort St. John and which was still independent, asked<sup>29</sup> Weir that his district be allowed to vote on the large area before being absorbed. He pointed out that Baldonnel had had "no trouble or disputes."

The Peace River Block News commented<sup>30</sup> editorially on the large unit. It considered that the greatest advantages would be a common mill rate and more incentive for teachers. It foresaw that there would be better retention of teachers. The News added that as new buildings would be necessary under the scheme, expenses would increase. Its strongest criticism was that as ratepayers would in future have "no say" in school affairs, local interest in schools would decline.

Several letters objecting to the large unit were







published in the Peace River Block News. Mrs. Charles Mixer, a trustee of the dissolved North Dawson School District, in an "open letter" to Morell, pointed out<sup>31</sup> that trustees had worked for nothing. She called the scheme "fascistic" and compared it with developments in Mussolini's Italy. "You just used high pressure salesmanship," she accused Morell, "and gave it to the teachers to take to the people. You are clever, you and your able assistant, the school inspector." She wondered who had recommended the plan, the trustees or Plenderleith. In conclusion Mrs. Mixer dismissed the large unit as a "lot of baloney."

J. P. Henderson and A. Lundin reiterated<sup>32</sup> Mrs. Mixer's charge of fascism. They said that the notice to secretaries dated October 18, nine days<sup>33</sup> after the scheme had been put into effect, did not give any reasons for abolishing the small boards. The former secretaries, they said, were to play the role of "local handymen and informers." They referred to the Nelson convention of school trustees as "the convention in the South" at which Peace River trustees had had no representation. Laws should be made by the legislative branch of government, they said. As for the argument that the provincial government was paying the major share of the cost of education, they felt sure that the rural ratepayer was paying indirectly. The inspector did not know the needs of each district, they averred, and quoted Aristotle as asking, "Which is the better judge of the







merits of a house, the expert carpenter who may build it, or the man who expects to use it and for whom it is built?" Henderson and Lundin also considered the scheme unfair, as rural schools but not "town schools" were forced to come in. The "town schools" referred to were Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Rolla, and Pouce Coupe. At this stage in the development of the large unit, this argument was not applicable; the only rural districts that had been absorbed into large units were those which had been unable to elect qualified trustees.

J. M. Hyndman of the dissolved North Dawson School District stated<sup>34</sup> that all work in that district had been done by contract. Hyndman was particularly proud that wood had been obtained at between \$1.70 and \$1.75 a cord. Peter M. Hyndman, also of North Dawson School District, denied<sup>35</sup> that the school trustees ever brought forth a resolution favoring large units. He charged that Plenderleith did not inspect schools enough,<sup>36</sup> and wanted Weir to be asked to return Plenderleith "from whence he came." The editor commented<sup>37</sup> in the December 14 issue that he had decided "to close the matter" of the large unit.

A petition bearing three hundred and eighty-one signatures was sent<sup>38</sup> to the Government of British Columbia. The petition, which is reproduced in Appendix E, described the large unit as "arbitrary," "despotic," "coercive," "scandalously un-British," and "undemocratic." It demanded that the "Public Schools of the District be restored to







the elected school boards of the people." After studying the petition, Plenderleith reported<sup>39</sup> that 17 per cent of the signatories lived outside of the unit, that two hundred and seventy-three of them were at least one year delinquent in their tax payments, and that fifty-three others were not on the voters' list. Plenderleith's attitude toward the critics is revealed<sup>40</sup> in his doctoral dissertation: "There was a great amount of opposition from those who had been squandering the local school funds." "These critics usually carry on their campaign by spreading false rumours regarding some phase of the administration of the unit."

Letters from Plenderleith and Morell to King

On January 17, 1935, in response to a request from H. B. King for information on the Peace River experiment, Plenderleith wrote<sup>41</sup> a letter which was later printed<sup>42</sup> in King's report on School Finance in British Columbia. The letter listed<sup>43</sup> the disadvantages of the "single school unit of administration" and explained Plenderleith's proposal to Willis. Finally, Plenderleith listed the improvements which he claimed had been made "as a result of the consolidation of school districts":

- (a) a unification of the three chief authorities responsible for school administration; i.e., the school trustees, the health authorities, and the professional school personnel (inspector and teachers);
- (b) complete co-ordination between the health authorities and the official trustee;







- (c) the carrying out of the provisions of the Public Schools Act "without fear of prejudice";
- (d) the freeing of teachers from petty tyranny;
- (e) the elimination of sectional jealousies caused by differences in mill rates;
- (f) the end of retardation of educational progress by local prejudice;
- (g) an end to applications from ratepayers asking to be transferred from one district to another;
- (h) the keeping of accurate books and accounts;
- (i) a saving of \$1600 on secretaries' stipends;
- (j) uniformity of teachers' salaries;
- (k) the introduction of a system of promoting teachers;
- (l) uniformity in services provided to all schools;
- (m) the freeing of the Department of Education from having to pay the initial grant for new schools;
- (n) a saving of \$240 on bank service charges;
- (o) a saving of about 110 per cent on the cost of fuel and ice;
- (p) a saving of about 5 per cent in the buying of school supplies;
- (q) an average mill rate of 5.89 mills;<sup>44</sup>
- (r) the awarding of contracts on a fair basis, i.e., by tender;
- (s) the end of "the secretary racket";
- (t) support of the plan by teachers;
- (u) the end of the obstructionist tactics by bachelors;
- (v) the petitioning for schools by settlers who previously had preferred "having their children grow up in ignorance . . . [to paying] for a new school";<sup>45</sup>







(w) the turning back to the government of land held for speculative purposes.<sup>46</sup>

This is indeed a formidable list of improvements for an experiment which was little more than three months old. If one accepts the criticisms made of the small unit of administration, however, most of the changes listed were inevitable provided that there was capable, efficient, and honest management by the official trustee and the inspector. Plenderleith concluded his letter by assuring King that ". . . the consolidated school system . . . [was] an outstanding success" and by recommending that an official trustee take charge of all rural schools in each assessment district of the province.

Morell also wrote<sup>47</sup> to King on January 17. Morell favored having an official trustee for each inspectorate in the province. He recommended<sup>48</sup> that the government pay a given percentage of teachers' salaries rather than of minimum salaries only. He stated that "perhaps . . . the strongest point of all" in the new plan was the transfer and promotion of teachers. Another advantage was the prompt payment of accounts. Morell added that taking control out of the hands of the local ratepayers could be largely compensated for by continuing the annual school meetings and by electing correspondents. On January 31 Willis recommended<sup>49</sup> to Morell that there be an elected advisory committee for each school. It might be well, the superintendent stated, for the inspector to add some local







man of influence if deemed desirable.

The King Report printed in full the letters from Plenderleith and Morell. King's recommendations that the inspector of schools act as official trustee and that an area council be elected were commented on in Chapter III. In April Plenderleith replaced<sup>50</sup> Morell as official trustee of the large unit.

### Discussion of the Large Unit at Meetings in the Peace River

On January 21 an executive meeting of the Peace River District Liberal Association at Dawson Creek opposed<sup>51</sup> the large unit. W. A. Watson, defeated Liberal candidate in the 1933 election, declared that the scheme was "a breach of British justice."

On February 6 Plenderleith explained<sup>52</sup> to a public meeting at Pouce Coupe that in all districts under an official trustee in the Peace River the administration had been taken over by the Department of Education under Section 12A of the Public Schools Act. He stated that the government paid<sup>53</sup>  $88\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of teachers' salaries and added that Morell received no remuneration for his duties as official trustee. After giving figures showing savings on secretaries' salaries, purchases of wood, ice, and school supplies, and bank charges, he said, "... It is not out of place to suggest that it is time for the Education Department to do away with an antiquated system resorted to by unorganized frontiers and adopt a more







centralized plan, similar to that utilized by the other Departments of the Government." The ratepayers voted<sup>54</sup> fifty-two to sixteen for a motion favoring one large area for the entire block. On February 12 Willis accepted Pouce Coupe's application and on March 29 named<sup>55</sup> Morell as official trustee. Section 12A referred to above simply stated<sup>56</sup> that it was "lawful for the Council of Public Instruction to alter the boundaries or abolish any rural school district."

On May 8 a public meeting was held<sup>57</sup> in Fort St. John to discuss entering the large administrative unit. Alwin Holland, who had taught school in the Peace River District for many years, was present at the meeting and reported<sup>58</sup> to Plenderleith. The meeting opposed "official control" by a vote of twenty-eight to eight. Holland stated that, although the concept of "high school training on an equitable basis" and equality of mill rates<sup>59</sup> "had appeal," most of those present regarded the school as "an individual community achievement" and feared losing their "sense of identity." The meeting opposed joining a large unit unless it had an elected body to review budgets and to decide on the total tax. Holland himself favored a "sharing of responsibility" between the official trustee and the people. In Holland's opinion, it was advisable to have an elected board which would have complete control over buildings and grounds while the official trustee would have control of matters related to the teaching staff. Under such an







arrangement, Holland concluded, the teachers' salaries should be paid entirely by the government. Plenderleith announced<sup>60</sup> the outcome of the meeting to Willis on May 27, mentioning that only thirty-seven of the district's two hundred and forty-five ratepayers had been present. Those who opposed the large unit, he said, had come "in full force" but those who were "not particularly interested" had stayed away.

Meetings held<sup>61</sup> at Kelly Lake and Sunset Prairie favored joining the large unit.

Reactions in the Peace River Block News in 1935  
to the Large Unit

In February and March the controversy concerning the large unit resumed in the Peace River Block News. The February 15 issue printed<sup>62</sup> twenty-three questions which it had previously sent to Plenderleith, and which appear below in paraphrased form:

- (a) Were the schools taken into the plan solely on the recommendation of the school inspector?
- (b) Is it the Department's intention to make the Peace River Block into one school district or two districts?
- (c) Will all local boards be abolished?
- (d) Will all lands in the Block be taxed?
- (e) Will the entire district have the same tax rate?
- (f) Will there be any allowances for districts which have already built their schools? (In this connection it was mentioned that Doe River had a rate of 3.4 mills.)







- (g) Is it fair not to make such a special allowance?
- (h) How many secretaries have agreed to act as correspondents?
- (i) How many boards entered the scheme under protest?
- (j) Do protests have any effect in preventing more districts being taken over?
- (k) How will costs be cut?
- (l) Will there be additional officials?
- (m) Will the government agent be paid for his duties as official trustee?
- (n) Who is going to pay the costs of higher salaries?
- (o) Will any schools be closed?
- (p) What is the use of holding annual meetings?
- (q) Where in the School Act is there authorization for taking such action? Was the authorization in the Special Powers Act? (See Chapter III.)
- (r) What percentage of taxes levied has been paid?
- (s) Must all supplies be ordered through the official trustee?
- (t) Why was the plan introduced so suddenly?
- (u) How can teachers be dismissed?
- (v) Are contracts awarded by tender or by patronage?
- (w) Do you know that the resolution favoring large units was rejected at the school trustees' convention in Nelson?<sup>63</sup>

Printed in the same issue was Plenderleith's reply<sup>64</sup> that the attitude of the Department of Education had been expressed on the majority of the questions at the Pouce Coupe meeting, an account of which had been sent to the editor. The editor stated that ". . . many of the questions [had] not been answered." The editorial in the same







edition questioned<sup>65</sup> the accuracy of some of Plenderleith's statements. It required "quite a stretch of imagination," the editorial said, "to read into . . . Section 12A the power for the Council of Public Instruction to formulate a scheme for the consolidation of a large district of three and a half million acres." The editorial also questioned the accuracy of the alleged saving of \$1600 in secretaries' salaries and of the provincial government's contribution of 88½ per cent of teachers' salaries. It enquired why Vancouver and Victoria continued to elect trustees if the whole scheme of electing local officials was "antiquated."

On February 22 the News announced<sup>66</sup> that it was re-opening its columns to correspondents on the school administration question because of receipt of the first letter supporting the scheme. The editor mentioned that he had not heard of anyone else being in favor. The letter from "An Old Trustee, Pouce Coupe," stated<sup>67</sup> that the more cautious element of the community was "averse to breaking into print." The letter favored the equalizing of taxation burden, mentioning that Hanshaw [Upper Cutbank] district had a mill rate of twenty before its dissolution. The letter pointed out that Vancouver with seven trustees for three hundred and twenty-five thousand people could hardly be compared with the school districts of the Peace. The "Old Trustee" said that advisory boards were a "proven and accepted adjunct to all big business and government." School meetings in the past, he said, had been abused by







local politicians, had degenerated into open fights, and had "encouraged sectionalism and sectarianism." He accused the editor of the Peace River Block News of bowing to public opinion.

Peter Hyndman stated<sup>68</sup> that the board system had been started by Gladstone, Peel, Melbourne, Lord John Russell, Palmerston, and Disraeli. Referring to Pouce Coupe's high mill rate, he said that that district's motto was, "Take my yoke upon thee." J. P. Henderson of Dawson Creek claimed<sup>69</sup> that the Department of Public Works was not operated well and should not be emulated. James H. Clark later revealed himself<sup>70</sup> as the "Old Trustee." He conceded that North Dawson and Saskatoon Creek Districts had been well managed, but stated that they were "almost isolated in their position for careful and economical administration."

#### Plenderleith's Report to Weir

On July 29 Plenderleith wrote<sup>71</sup> to Weir in reply to the Minister's request for a report on the Peace River experiment. Plenderleith stated<sup>72</sup> that there were forty-seven schools in the area under his official trusteeship. He said that there had been opposition at first because of lack of understanding, but explanations at public meetings and the efficiency of the scheme had changed the attitude of many people. He announced that a plan for a large unit to embrace the entire area had been submitted to the Department of Education, but in accordance with the wishes







of T. F. Turgeon, Liberal candidate in the forthcoming federal election of October 16, action upon it was being delayed so as not to affect adversely Turgeon's support.

Plenderleith reported that according to "general opinion" the C.C.F. party would get the most votes in the Peace River area in the next provincial election. Plenderleith himself was confident, however, that many people who had voted C.C.F. in the last election would vote Liberal because of the "greater equality" that had been achieved under reorganization. Thus the Liberals would receive more votes than they had done in 1933.

To Weir's suggestion that Plenderleith should accept a transfer to another part of the province, Plenderleith replied that this would create difficulties for his successor and result in a loss of prestige for the Department of Education and for the government.

#### Events in August, September, and October

On August 9 a news story "special" on the King Report appeared<sup>73</sup> in the Peace River Block News stating that ". . . the consolidated school district system of administration [would] become general" if the recommendations of the report were adopted. In September after Dawson Creek school board passed a resolution favoring union with the large district, Dawson Creek was placed<sup>74</sup> under an official trusteeship. On September 14 Plenderleith was interviewed<sup>75</sup> by a reporter from The Edmonton Journal







while in Edmonton on his way from the Peace River to Victoria. A newspaper report based on the interview described<sup>76</sup> Plenderleith's role as that of a "virtual dictator" and "a very benevolent despot." It referred to the economies effected as "sugar-coating" which had dissipated original resentment. Plenderleith was reported<sup>77</sup> as saying that even those few ratepayers whose taxes had been raised were now "loud in their praise" of the many improvements. On October 29 Willis, while in Edmonton for a meeting with the deputy ministers of education for Alberta and Saskatchewan, stated<sup>78</sup> that the Peace River experiment was so "successful" that his government was going to "institute the scheme" in other parts of the province.

Although no trustees from the Peace River attended the 1935 convention of the B.C.S.T.A., two delegates referred to the district. H. P. Coombes said<sup>79</sup> that the conditions in the Peace River and in "more populous areas [were] in no way analogous." In the Peace River District, he said, there were not suitable people available to act as trustees. H. Manning said<sup>80</sup> that the Peace River was a pioneer area lacking in finances.

## 2. The Extension of the Large Unit

### The Establishment of the Peace River Rural School District

In October 1935 the Council of Public Instruction formed<sup>81</sup> the Peace River Rural School District, to include







all of the former Peace River school districts except Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, and Rolla. There was to be a common mill rate for the entire unit. The organization of the district shown in Fig. 9 is very similar to that suggested by Plenderleith a year earlier except for the combination of the positions of inspector and official trustee and the addition of an advisory area council. In spite of its desire to join, Dawson Creek was excluded<sup>82</sup> because of its large debt. However, although it had a higher mill rate, Dawson Creek was administered<sup>83</sup> as a part of the large unit. Plenderleith sent a form letter to the secretaries of the dissolved districts informing them of the formation of the large unit. (See Appendix F.)

The health services of the plan had already been established<sup>84</sup> with the appointment of J. S. Cull as medical health officer. His staff consisted of two part-time dentists, four full-time nurses, and three part-time nurses. The nurses were stationed at Rolla, Kelly Lake, Dawson Creek, Rose Prairie, Fort St. John, Progress, and Cecil Lake. The Department of Education made grants<sup>85</sup> toward the salaries of the employees, the Rockefeller Institute paid 25 per cent of the cost, and the Department of Health provided the balance.

#### Opposition to the Extended District

The main opposition to the extension of the centralized scheme came from the region north of the Peace River,

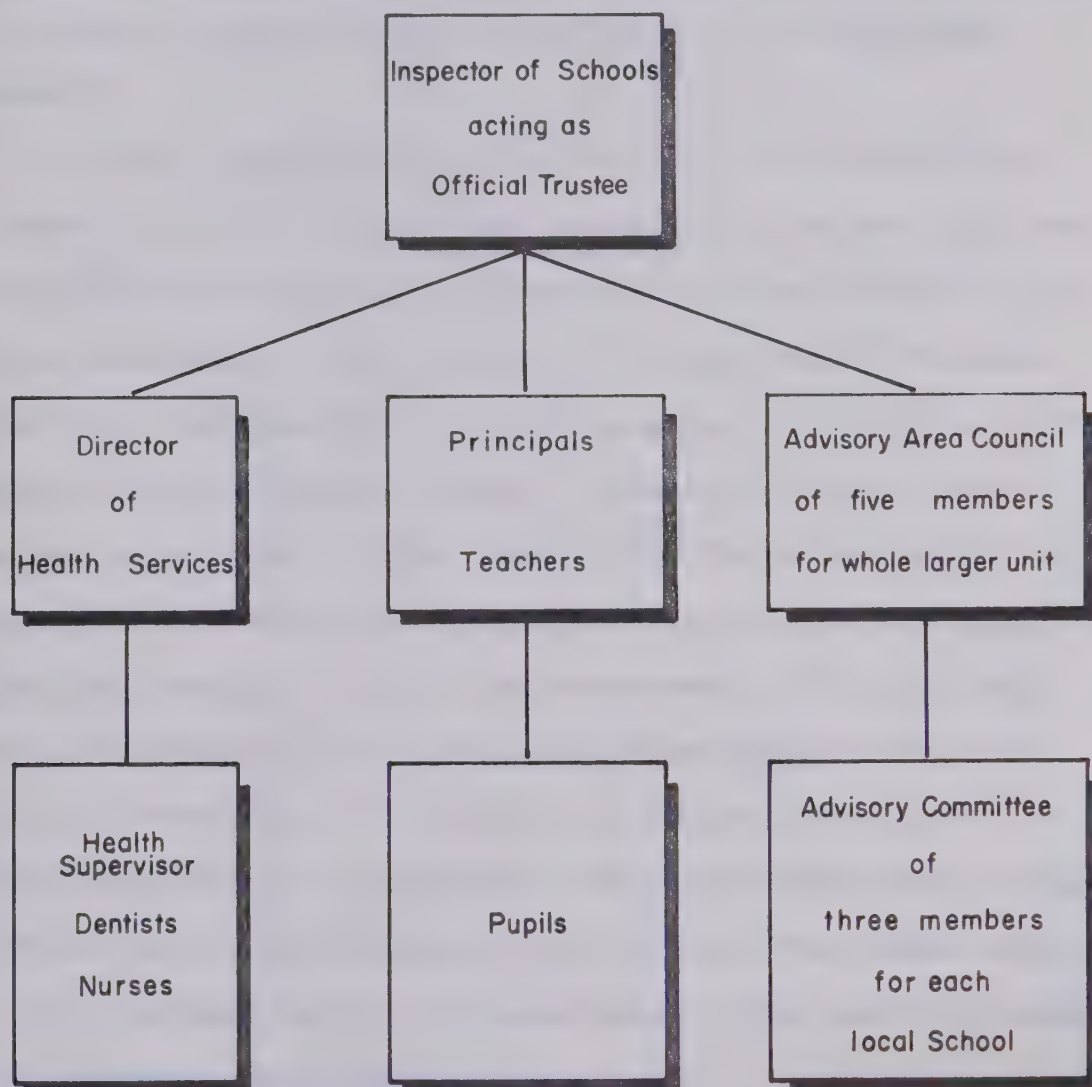






Fig.9

## REVISED PLAN FOR ADMINISTRATION OF A RURAL INSPECTORAL UNIT\*



\* Submitted by W. A. Plenderleith to Superintendent of Education, October 1935. British Columbia, Report of Public Schools of British Columbia, 1936 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1936), H62-3.







where the number of schools included was raised<sup>86</sup> from six to eighteen. According to Plenderleith,<sup>87</sup> the ". . . opposition was organized by a secretary who disliked the idea of losing his annual honorarium, and by his brother who thought he would lose his monopoly of boarding the teacher."

In July, anticipating the change, H. G. Hadland of Baldonnel, who had opposed the large unit the previous year, informed<sup>88</sup> Weir that local interest would be "killed" if the plan were executed. On November 3 he informed<sup>89</sup> Plenderleith that his greatest objection was to the "high-handed" manner of effecting the change. A meeting of ratepayers from Baldonnel, Peace View, and Taylor Flats was held<sup>90</sup> at Baldonnel on November 9. Hadland explained that he had called the meeting "to let the Department [of Education] know how strongly [the ratepayers] were opposed to the so-called 'new deal.'" After A. R. Hadland had been elected chairman, he complained that the ratepayers' wishes had "been absolutely ignored." He added, "Our stand should be: 'No representation, no taxation.'" The meeting passed the following resolutions:

That the Minister of Education be asked to send in a representative to thoroughly explain why it has been deemed necessary to take the control of our schools out of our hands.

That the ratepayers of these three school districts here represented refuse to have their books, records and accounts turned in to Dr. Plenderleith until such time as the Department of Education grant us our requests.







That, unless our request is granted and we are given the opportunity of hearing from a responsible representative of the government why the control of our schools is being placed in the hands of one man and what the Department's aim is to be, then the parents of Baldonnel, Taylor and Peace View districts, backed by all the ratepayers of these districts, do hereby notify the Minister of Education that on January 1, 1936, we shall cease to send our children to school and shall continue to keep them home until our request is granted.

That Dr. Plenderleith be removed on account of his high-handed action in this matter.

That the minutes of this meeting be sent to:  
The Rt. Hon. T. D. Pattullo, Premier;  
The Rt. Hon. (sic) G. Weir; C. Planta,  
M.L.A., H. Winch, M.L.A., The Vancouver  
Sun; The Edmonton Journal; The Peace  
River Block News; The Secretary of the  
B.C.S.T.A.; The Vancouver Province.

A. R. Hadland's report on the meeting to the Peace River Block News contained<sup>91</sup> additional complaints: When asked by a reporter from The Edmonton Journal, "You are then a dictator?" Plenderleith was reported as having replied: "Virtually, yes." Dr. Plenderleith had "not fulfilled his duty, as inspector of schools, inasmuch as he had not inspected the children's work. . . ." Reports of the threatened "strike" were broadcast<sup>92</sup> by radio stations throughout the province.

One of Plenderleith's tactics in retaliating against such attacks was to encourage<sup>93</sup> teachers to write letters to Weir and Willis commending the change. In letters to Weir and Willis, Nancy Craig, teacher at Riverside, said<sup>94</sup> that the new scheme had resulted in a barn, better educational







aids, and medical and dental services for her school. Another teacher wrote:<sup>95</sup> "As far as we teachers are concerned, the larger school system offers us a new lease of life—a new freedom from local tyranny and a new objective. The very air here is alive with a new spirit of endeavour and service." R. A. Cheeseman, teacher at Pine View, informed<sup>96</sup> Plenderleith that he had written to Willis and Weir "along the lines suggested" and said that he was encouraging others to write also. He had written a letter for J. Labancon, but preferred "their own handwriting." He added that he had asked people "to include disapproval of the Baldonnel attack" in their letters.

On November 29 the Peace River Block News printed<sup>97</sup> on its front page a "Public Apology to the Department of Education." The news report of the Baldonnel meeting was "entirely misleading," the editorial stated. It was not true that the school boards had been treated with contempt; they had each been sent a letter. Plenderleith had informed the Peace River Block News that he had visited every school and tested the children. Plenderleith's admission that he was a dictator was taken from its context. The News reported Plenderleith's full answer as follows:

If you consider the District Engineer to be a dictator since he has control over his unit of administration, or if you consider the Government Agent to be a dictator since he has complete control over his unit of administration, and since all these men are carrying out the direct instructions of the people's elected representatives (the Ministers of the Cabinet), then the new system would fall into the same category.







Meetings at Baldonnel and Rolla

Weir asked Plenderleith to attend the second Baldonnel meeting which was held<sup>98</sup> on the afternoon of December 14. In spite of the sub-zero temperature, rate-payers came<sup>99</sup> from Cecil Lake, Taylor Flats, Erinlea, Transpine, and North Pine. In all, approximately two hundred people were present.<sup>100</sup> Plenderleith spoke at some length to the assembled ratepayers. He explained that the Council of Public Instruction was primarily responsible for making recommendations concerning education to the legislature. As the system of local administration was rapidly breaking down, an Educational Finance and Administration Commission had been set up. Plenderleith added that 90 per cent of teachers' salaries in the Peace was paid by the provincial government. The remaining 10 per cent, which was the local districts' share, was not all collected for 1935. Plenderleith said that "he who pays the piper" should call the tune. Plenderleith explained that the Public Schools Act enabled<sup>101</sup> the Council of Public Instruction to dissolve a rural school district and to appoint an official trustee to conduct the affairs of any school district. He mentioned that the Revision Committee of the Educational Finance Commission had recommended<sup>102</sup> "some form of school board." He expected the legislature to pass an amendment to the Schools Act at the next session to provide for such a board. Plenderleith







stated that improvements in education in the past had depended upon local interest, initiative, and resources, and the result had been a lack of uniformity in services and administration. He then outlined the advantages of the large unit.

Plenderleith's answers to various charges are paraphrased<sup>103</sup> below:

- (a) Charge: The plan was introduced without consulting the people.  
 Answer: The plan followed the recommendations of a government commission.<sup>104</sup>
- (b) Charge: The scheme is undemocratic.  
 Answer: There are no school boards in England.
- (c) Charge: Local interest may diminish.  
 Answer: Local interest often took the form of terrorizing teachers.
- (d) Charge: Politics may enter the administration of the schools.  
 Answer: Education is free of party politics.
- (e) Charge: The scheme is un-British.  
 Answer: The systems in Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain are similar to this scheme.
- (f) Charge: The unit should not be controlled by an official trustee.  
 Answer: This type of control is a delegation of authority.
- (g) Charge: The advisory board has no say in actual decisions.  
 Answer: The provincial government pays most of the costs.







(h) Charge: The local residents were not advised.

Answer: The plan had been fully explained in the Peace River Block News, letters had been sent to secretaries, and meetings had been held.

The answers to questions b, c, d, and e, were all taken<sup>105</sup> from the King Report. Questions from the floor with Plenderleith's replies follow:

(a) Question: Will any schools be closed as a result of the plan?

Answer: No, weather conditions will not permit any consolidations.

(b) Question: What is the salary of the official trustee?

Answer: He receives no extra remuneration for his duties as official trustee.

(c) Question: Who carries out the audits?

Answer: The Department of Education.

(d) Question: Were sixty cords of wood ordered by the official trustee for Cecil Lake?

Answer: No.<sup>106</sup>

(e) Question: Were the bank balances of the districts which were taken over a significant contributor to the claimed saving of \$2800? (The questioner understood that Baldonnel had a sizable balance).

Answer: About half of the schools including Baldonnel had overdrafts. The total credits were insignificant once outstanding bills were paid.

(f) Question: How will the large unit affect health services?

Answer: Under the small district system, 90 per cent of the medical health officer's recommendations were not put into effect. Medical and dental services will now be provided free







to those on relief, and those who are needy but not on relief will pay only 50 per cent. Vaccinations and inoculations will be provided free. Goitre tablets will be provided at a charge of fifteen cents per year per child. Spectacles will be provided on the same basis as medical and dental services. Clinical rates for spectacles will reduce costs from \$10.00 to \$3.75.

Plenderleith concluded by outlining specific benefits that would accrue<sup>107</sup> to Peace View, Sunrise, Taylor Flats, and Baldonnel and by promising free night schools, free high school, and increased library facilities. A motion was made from the floor assuring the Department of Education of the meeting's "fullest co-operation." Only those who had been present at the previous meeting were allowed to vote, and the motion passed thirty-seven to fourteen.

H. G. Hadland informed<sup>108</sup> Weir that those present had been unanimous in thanking Weir for sending Plenderleith to speak to them. He said that there was a "strong feeling" in favor of the third section of "the King's commission (sic).<sup>109</sup>" This writer believes<sup>109</sup> that Hadland was referring to the desirability of some form of school board.

At Rolla in February Plenderleith explained<sup>110</sup> the benefits of the large district. The ratepayers expressed interest and asked how they could obtain the benefits without joining the large unit. Plenderleith replied that the benefits would be very expensive for a single small district. There is<sup>111</sup> no record of any resolutions made at the meeting.







### Night School Program

During the 1935 - 1936 winter, twenty-two centres had<sup>112</sup> night school programs. There were no tuition fees but those enrolling had to purchase <sup>113</sup> necessary books. Plenderleith said<sup>114</sup> that "such subjects as" public speaking, home veterinary work, commercial art, farm book-keeping, shorthand, typing, arithmetic, English, home nursing, and agriculture were offered. Parkland School had the largest enrolment. As J. Buran, who was probably chairman of the school's advisory committee, and who claimed credit for the night school's success, stated,<sup>115</sup> "We overdone (sic) Dawson Creek with our attendance." Buran's motives for encouraging attendance at night schools are revealed in a verbatim excerpt from a letter which he wrote<sup>116</sup> to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

Seeing [the] trouble among those raskals, I made the plan to establish Educational Courses to learn them better manners. . . . Do not let them to be Canadian Citizens until they show you report of two years attendance.

### Plenderleith's 1936 Report

Reporting to the Superintendent of Education on the school-year 1935 - 1936, Plenderleith listed<sup>117</sup> improvements under three headings: economy of operation, enlarged educational offerings, and savings to taxpayers.

Concerning economy of operation, he claimed a saving of more than \$12,000, made possible by eliminating







secretaries' salaries, the yearly audit fee, and bank charges; and by "blanket insurance," standardized janitors' salaries, purchase of supplies in bulk, and proper budgeting.

He listed as improved educational offerings: free high schools, authorization of new high schools at Dawson Creek and Rolla and of a junior high school at Dawson Creek, provision for technical courses, free night schools, library equipment averaging \$25.00 per school, library centres for adults, free dental service, improved health services, replacement of the North Dawson Creek school, the establishment of four new schools, the re-opening of four schools, the building of fourteen ice-houses, seven barns, and seventeen entry porches, and better standards of heating and ventilation. Some of these improvements would be better classified as improved health and sanitation facilities than as educational offerings; others, some of which such as the opening and closing of schools<sup>118</sup> are dubious improvements, would probably have occurred under the small district system.

Some comment is necessary concerning free high-schooling. The only school in the large unit offering high school courses was Pouce Coupe Superior School, which in the school-year 1935 - 1936 had<sup>119</sup> ten students in grade nine, four in grade ten, and four in grade eleven. As Dawson Creek with twenty-six students in these grades<sup>120</sup>







was better equipped to provide high-schooling for the large unit and as it was also under Plenderleith's trusteeship, the Dawson Creek high school was instructed to accept students from anywhere in the large unit. The large unit paid the fees of these students and also of students who found it more convenient to take<sup>121</sup> high school courses at Rolla or Fort St. John. In the school year 1934 to 1935 Dawson Creek's high school fee was \$10.00<sup>122</sup> per student. A greater expense for a child residing outside of the high school centres was the cost of boarding. Realizing this, Plenderleith recommended<sup>123</sup> four routes for transporting children to Dawson Creek. As a more desirable alternative, he suggested<sup>124</sup> to Willis that the Department of Education pay the children's board and room, the cost of which he estimated at \$1200. There is no record of a reply by Willis or any further correspondence on the subject. During the year 1934 to 1935 there were<sup>125</sup> three students from outside Dawson Creek attending school there. There is no record of the number of outside students attending the following year but a comparison of high school enrolments in 1935 and 1936 reveals<sup>126</sup> an increase of seven in the latter year. It appears that no more than 26 per cent of grade eight students in ungraded schools proceeded to grade nine in 1936.

Plenderleith reported<sup>127</sup> that the total school taxes in the Peace River in the years 1932 to 1934 had been \$64,455.58 and in the years 1934 to 1936, \$60,139.88.







The average cost of education per pupil in the Peace River Unit was \$61.82 compared with \$68.37 in the whole of British Columbia. He gave the following information concerning taxes:

Number of districts in which the tax rate had been increased	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Average increase in these districts	-						2.5 mills
Number of districts in which the tax rate had decreased	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
Average decrease in these districts	-						4.7 mills
Number of districts not affected	-	-					8
Maximum increase	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.7 mills
Maximum decrease	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
Average tax before the formation of the large unit	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.4 mills
Average tax after the formation of the large unit	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.0 mills

Plenderleith reported that he had "dozens of letters on file" expressing appreciation for what had been accomplished, including some from people who had protested two years earlier. He concluded, "All phases of work in connection with educational administration have been improved without increasing the gross cost of education. . . . Judged by results, the present system of school administration is much more efficient in every way than the former system of school administration in the small units."

#### Messages to the 1936 B.C.S.T.A. Convention

In response to a request for information regarding the







Peace River experiment from the B.C.S.T.A. in September, Plenderleith stated <sup>128</sup> that the average annual cost of education had been reduced from \$91,000 to \$76,000 and suggested that the trustees send a committee to see the results. Peter Hyndman informed<sup>129</sup> the trustees that although he was ". . . very strongly opposed to [the system] of inauguration from every viewpoint, generally speaking, the improvement [was] wonderfully beneficial." He added that teachers' salaries should have been higher.

### Plenderleith's Transfer to Abbotsford

In November, Plenderleith was transferred to Abbotsford to take the place of Philip Sheffield, who had died. (See Chapter VI.) According to the news report in the Peace River Block News, when Plenderleith appeared<sup>130</sup> briefly at the South Peace River Teachers' Convention at Pouce Coupe, the teachers "cheered [him] to the echo." The report continued that ". . . every teacher [felt] a keen unhappiness in losing his guide, philosopher, and friend."

### 3. Articles in The B.C. Teacher

From October 1935 to October 1936 a series of articles dealing with the Peace River Experiment appeared in The B.C. Teacher, the official organ of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Plenderleith had encouraged<sup>131</sup> teachers to contribute articles.







Laurence MacRae, who had been principal at Pouce Coupe until leaving the district in June 1935, stated<sup>132</sup> that ". . . since the formation of the large unit friction for the teacher [was] practically a thing of the past and he [found] himself no longer the victim of the whims of a local oligarchy." MacRae said that provision for large administrative units was "the Magna Carta of the rural school teacher." C. Dudley Gaitskill, principal at Dawson Creek, reported<sup>133</sup> great enthusiasm among the teachers. "No longer are they at the beck and call of untrained masters. . . ." He said that schools were now well-equipped, maintained, and heated, and that teachers chose their own boarding places.

Both of these articles tended to exaggerate the teachers' new-found freedom. Some of the case studies in the previous chapter reveal that friction was by no means "practically a thing of the past." Concerning boarding, Plenderleith in 1936 advised<sup>134</sup> Miss M. Anderson, newly appointed teacher at North Dawson, not to take a boarding place until she had seen the local correspondent.

Everett F. Hurt, principal at Rolla, and J. E. Lean, of Doe River, collaborated<sup>135</sup> in the writing of "Development of Education in the Peace River District." Although their primary purpose was to trace the history of education in the Peace River, there were some favorable comments concerning the large unit. An article by Charles D. Ovans, principal at Pouce Coupe, entitled<sup>136</sup> "The Effect







of the Larger Unit of Administration on a Rural Superior School," defined the larger unit as "a centralized system of school administration under one head . . . [the] Official Trustee who is kept in close contact with and advised of the needs of each school by a local correspondent." Ovans quoted Plenderleith's answers to criticisms of the large unit which Plenderleith in turn had quoted from the King Report. In "Adult Education in the Peace River Block," Jack Chatfield, teacher at Parkland, said<sup>137</sup> that a good program of adult education was possible in the Peace River because the cost was carried by the whole unit. J. S. Cull, medical health officer, stated<sup>138</sup> that ". . . 'action' [was] the word of the day" in the Peace River. Under the small unit system, the health program had been hampered by the employment of part time health inspectors and by uncooperative school boards. In a two-month period, he reported, over one thousand children had received dental examinations. The final article in the series, written by Plenderleith, summarized<sup>139</sup> what he considered the benefits of the experiment.

Two letters in the fall of 1935 asking that there be articles published on the King Report were probably a part of Plenderleith's campaign to publicize the large unit. One letter was from F. A. McLellan of Ocean Falls whom Plenderleith had asked earlier to write such a letter.<sup>140</sup> The other was from Ovans.<sup>141</sup>







An editorial in January 1936 described<sup>142</sup> the re-organization in the Peace River District as a "courageous experiment" and the publicity following the first Baldonnel meeting as the "terrifying reverberation of a tempest in a teapot." The first critical comment in The B.C. Teacher came<sup>143</sup> from B. B. Thorsteinsson. He said that as conditions in the Peace River had not been good, teachers there had welcomed centralization, but wondered if centralization would benefit areas where conditions were better.

#### 4. The Vote on the Large Unit

Because of new legislation passed at the 1936 session of the British Columbia Legislature (See Chapter III) it was necessary to permit the Peace River ratepayers to vote on the large unit. A series of unsigned articles, probably written by the new inspector, A. S. Towell, appeared in the Peace River Block News prior to the voting. The first article explained<sup>144</sup> why a vote was necessary. The next explained<sup>145</sup> why Dawson Creek was not included in the large unit but stated that "in actual practice" there was no difference between it and the parts of the region which were included. Figures were given regarding local taxes and government grants, and information concerning the health program. The third article dealt<sup>146</sup> with libraries, free high schooling, library centres for adults, and improved staff spirit. Next, Towell answered<sup>147</sup> the charge that







the scheme was autocratic by stating that it could be administered in a democratic or an autocratic way depending upon the person in charge but the ". . . running of our schools is something that ought to be done by an expert and specially trained person. . . . If the history of education proves anything, it proves that." The final article contained<sup>148</sup> a summary of benefits.

Because of the provincial election on June 4, almost two months elapsed between the final article and the first meeting at which a vote was taken. There were twenty-nine meetings, all of which were held<sup>149</sup> between June 10 and June 26. The total vote was three hundred and forty-two in favor, one hundred and nine opposed. A detailed record of the votes cast appears in Table XI. An analysis of the voting reveals that more than half of the negative votes were cast at the seven meetings north of the Peace River, perhaps because this region was remote<sup>150</sup> from the administrative centre. Even here, however, the majority was opposed at only one meeting. Most of the other negative votes were recorded in the well-established districts in the South.

The choice, of course, was between the retention of the large unit in its existing form and a return to the old small units. There was no provision for a different type of tax structure, units intermediate in size, or for a large unit controlled by an elected school board. Realizing this limitation, the ratepayers at the Pouce Coupe







TABLE XI

VOTE ON LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT IN THE  
PEACE RIVER DISTRICT, JUNE 10 - JUNE 26,  
1937<sup>\*</sup>

	In Favor	Opposed
Hays	11	0
Swan Lake and Tupper Creek	17	0
Willow Valley	18	4
Sunset Prairie	17	1
High Ridge	9	0
East Pouce Coupe	5	4
Pouce Coupe	6	0
☐ Cecil Lake, Transpine and Erinlea	16	10
Erinlea <sup>☐</sup>	2	0
☐ Taylor Flats and Peace View	32	3
☐ Charlie Lake	0	6
☐ Fish Creek and Pine View	8	13
Devereaux	8	0
Arras	8	1
Carpio	2	0
Shearerdale	19	0
Doe Creek	15	5
Sunny Brook, Feller's Heights	11	3
Groundbirch, Tuscolla	23	0
South Dawson	1	18
North Dawson	16	14
Seven Mile Creek, Lake View	5	0
Sunrise Valley, Willow Brook	9	0
Sweetwater, Parkland	15	0
Landry, Belle View	9	0
North Rolla	8	0
☐ Baldonnel, Sunrise	13	10
☐ Rose Prairie, Upper Pine	13	7
☐ North Pine	26	10
	342	109

<sup>☐</sup>Two Erinlea residents who were not present at the meeting were permitted to cast their votes the next day.

☐ Meetings held north of the Peace River.

<sup>\*</sup>Source: Peace River Block News, July 2, 1937.







meeting decided not to vote but instead passed<sup>151</sup> a motion stating that as the provincial government was responsible for settlement on poor land and the lack of railways, it should bear the cost of education, and that Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe, East Pouce Coupe, Rolla, Lake View, Landry, Kilkerran and North and South Dawson Creek should form one district under a locally elected school board working with the inspector. It is significant that all of the areas mentioned were in the well-established part of the district.

##### 5. An Assessment of the Peace River Experiment

The Peace River project was at least partially successful if one uses the criterion that the public in the last analysis must be the judge<sup>152</sup> of the success of the educational experiment. This writer is of the opinion that considerably more was achieved in effecting economies than in improving educational opportunities.

Although most of the complaints made regarding the large unit concerned the abolition of school boards, the Department of Education had excellent reasons for abolishing them in the Peace River. First, most of the small districts had shown themselves incapable of managing their own affairs. Second, weather and road conditions and distances would have made it impossible for a board representative of all areas in the large unit to operate effectively. Third, during the formative period a large unit may benefit







from expert direction. Plenderleith claims<sup>153</sup> that he favored centralized control because of the last reason mentioned. (It is perhaps an interesting commentary on the limited freedom enjoyed by civil servants that while in the Peace River he justified his actions using the doctrinaire arguments originating with Weir and King.)

Using teachers' salaries as a criterion, the Peace River experiment was not wholly successful, at least from the teachers' viewpoint. In 1933 to 1934, the average annual teacher's salary in British Columbia was \$1230, while in the Peace River the average was \$819. By 1936 to 1937, the provincial average had risen to \$1386 and the average Peace River salary to \$848.<sup>154</sup> Thus, in the three year period, Peace River salaries increased by only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent compared with a provincial increase of almost 8 per cent. In 1937 the B.C.T.F. asked<sup>155</sup> the Department of Education to raise salaries in the Peace River. In the year 1935 to 1936, most teachers in the Peace River who had previous experience in the district were given<sup>156</sup> an increase of \$20.00. The next year, the minimum salary remained unchanged but increments of \$50.00 per year were given,<sup>157</sup> to a maximum salary of \$930.

There was a steady improvement in teacher retention and teacher certification during the experimental period. (See Tables XII and XIII.)

Probably because men generally remained teachers







TABLE XII  
TEACHER RETENTION IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT,  
1933 - 1937\*

	1933-1934	1934-1935	1935-1936	1936-1937
Number of teachers	67	73	70	68
Number of teachers who were on staff the previous year	28	44	30	42
Rate of retention (percentage)	42	66	41	60

\*Sources: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1933-1937 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1933-1937); J. F. K. English, "The Peace River Educational Administrative Unit" (mimeographed, Pouce Coupe, 1942).







TABLE XIII  
 CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT  
 1933 - 1937<sup>\*</sup>

	1932-1933	1933-1934	1934-1935	1935-1936	1936-1937
Academic	3	4	4	4	3
First Class	31	41	47	46	39
Second Class	31	22	22	20	26
Third Class	1	-	-	-	-
Temporary	1	-	-	-	-

<sup>\*</sup>Based on same sources as those for Table XII.

TABLE XIV  
 MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS IN THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT  
 1933 - 1937<sup>\*</sup>

	1932-1933	1933-1934	1934-1935	1935-1936	1936-1937
Male Teachers	17	21	26	36	37
Female Teachers	50	46	47	34	31
Ratio	25:75	31:59	45:55	51:49	55:45

<sup>\*</sup>Based on same sources as those for Table XII.







longer than women and because he preferred men to women teachers in many of the outlying districts, Plenderleith considered<sup>158</sup> the ratio of male to female teachers significant. He gave the ratio for 1934 as 40:60, for 1935 as 50:50, and for 1936 as 60:40. Assuming that he based these ratios upon the statistics for the beginning of each school-year, they are somewhat similar to those obtained by the writer. (See Table XIV.)

The failure of the large unit to provide equality of opportunity in the field of secondary education has already been referred to. Indeed, this writer finds it difficult to discover any major educational improvements resulting from the formation of the large unit. One teacher interviewed said that the health plan was the only recognizable change and another said that supplies were easier to obtain.<sup>159</sup> Something that stands out very clearly in the correspondence of Morell, Plenderleith, and Towell is concern for the health of the children. Requests for action to provide sanitary facilities and pure drinking water appear to have received prompt attention.

It is difficult not to sympathize with those who complained of the manner in which the large unit was introduced. It would surely have been more diplomatic to call trustees together at a series of regional meetings to explain the plan than merely to write letters







to the school board secretaries.

With regard to the likelihood of other districts adopting the Peace River pattern of administration, it was all too easy for them to dismiss the Peace River as an isolated and depressed region and to say that what had occurred there did not apply to them. (See Chapter IV.) Possibly anticipating such a reaction, the Department of Education as early as 1935 was seeking<sup>160</sup> an opportunity to experiment elsewhere in the province. Such an opportunity came in the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford region of the Lower Fraser Valley.







## NOTES

1. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1934 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1934), N5. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.
2. W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in the Reorganization and Administration of a Rural Inspectoral Unit in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1937), 41. Cited hereafter as Plenderleith, "Reorganization."
3. The suggestion was made in a letter from Plenderleith referred to by Willis. S. J. Willis to M. S. Morell, July 5, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD. The three original official trusteeships were Hays, Bear Flat, and Upper Pine. Morell to Canadian Bank of Commerce, August 24, 1934, ibid. The three new official trusteeships were Hudson Hope, High Ridge, and Willowbrook. Willis to Morell, July 5, 1934, ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Morell to Willis, July 12, 1934, ibid.
6. Willis to Morell, July 18, 1934, ibid.
7. Billy West to G. M. Weir, July 18, 1934, ibid.
8. The plan involved the closure of ten schools south of the Peace River and four schools to the north. In most cases West advocated the relocation of schools to more central positions. Ibid.
9. H. B. King to Morell, July 24, 1934, ibid. King also expressed an interest in Morell's letter of July 12. Morell to King, August 3, 1934, ibid.
10. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H59.
11. Interview with William Plenderleith, June 15, 1970.
12. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H59.
13. Ibid., 1935, S28.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 1936, H59.







16. W. A. Plenderleith to Willis, September 26, 1934,  
Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.  
South Peace included: Springhill, Hanshaw, Hays,  
Tupper Creek, High Ridge, Tate Creek, Swan Lake,  
Swan Lake North, Riverside. North Peace included:  
Montney, North Pine, Upper Pine, Rose Prairie,  
Crystal Spring, Clayton. Central Peace included:  
Sweetwater, Parkland, Dawson Creek North, Dawson  
Creek South, Willowbrook, Devereaux, Sunnybrook,  
Sunrise Valley, Progress, Arras, Bon Accord,  
Willow Valley, Groundbirch, Tuscolla Mountain.  
East Peace included: Alderdale, Carpio, Coleman  
Creek, Doe Creek, Lake View, Rolla North,  
Saskatoon Creek, Seven Mile Corner, Shearerdale,  
Valley View.
17. British Columbia, British Columbia Gazette, October 5,  
1934; October 25, 1934. The districts were not  
created at the same time because there was a  
delay in receiving the definitions of boundaries  
for Peace River East from the Lands Department.  
Letter from Plenderleith to the writer, September  
29, 1970.
18. Willis to Morell, October 9, 1934, and October 26, 1934,  
Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
19. Report of Public Schools, 1935, S29.
20. W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in Centralization,"  
H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia  
(Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 106. Cited  
hereafter as Plenderleith, "An Experiment."
21. Morell to C. E. Tomlinson, former secretary of Crystal  
Spring School, October 18, 1934. Correspondence  
of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
22. Peace River Block News, November 2, 1934.
23. Reports of the Proceedings of the Thirtieth Convention  
of the British Columbia School Trustees'  
Association, n.p., n.d., held at Nelson,  
September 17, 18, 19, 1934, 62. Cited here-  
after as Reports of Proceedings, with the place  
and dates of the convention.
24. Peace River Block News, November 26, 1936. In 1933  
local taxes raised \$32,982.20 and the  
government grant was \$58,389.92.







25. Minutes of the South Peace River Teachers' Convention, October 27, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
26. A. M. Petch to Morell, October 25, 1934, ibid.
27. J. P. Henderson to Willis, October 27, 1934, ibid.
28. Plenderleith outlined the duties of the correspondent as follows: keeping the official trustee informed of the conditions and requirements of his school and acting as secretary at the annual meeting. Plenderleith, "An Experiment," 107. As the position evolved, it came to include the following additional duties: giving authorization of the use of the school in the evenings, posting notices of tenders, giving approval of bills for work done at, and materials supplied to his school, and making recommendations as to which tenders should be awarded. J. F. K. English, "The Peace River Administrative Unit" (mimeographed, Pouce Coupe, 1942), 22-3.
29. H. G. Hadland to Weir, November 12, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
30. Peace River Block News, November 2, 1934.
31. Ibid., November 16, 1934.
32. Ibid., November 24, 1934.
33. Actually the notice was sent thirteen days after the creation of three of the larger districts.  
Vide supra.
34. Ibid., November 30, 1934.
35. Ibid., December 14, 1934.
36. This is a recurring criticism of Plenderleith. See Chapter VI.
37. Ibid.
38. Plenderleith, "Reorganization," Appendix, 35-6.
39. Ibid., Appendix, 37. Plenderleith classified the delinquencies as follows:
 

30	- one year
73	- two years
94	- three years
56	- four years
20	- five years.







40. Ibid., 63, 151.
41. Plenderleith to King, January 17, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
42. King, 104-109.
43. Vide supra.
44. The mill rates were as follows:

Peace River Central	5.6
Peace River East	5.9
Peace River North	4.6
Peace River South	7.3

Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 69.
45. Plenderleith was referring here to land-owners who previously had been outside any school district. The writer found no record of any petitions for new schools in November and December 1934, or in January 1935.
46. The statement that land had already been turned back to avoid an expected mill rate of five or six mills, especially at a time when many land-owners were not paying their taxes, does not seem credible. Presumably in items 22 and 23 and in several others Plenderleith was anticipating what would happen in the future.
47. Morell to King, January 17, 1935, ibid.
48. The government at this time paid a share of only the minimum salary; any extra amounts had to be paid entirely by the local district. See Chapter II.
49. Willis to Morell, January 31, 1935, ibid.
50. Report of Public Schools, 1935, S28. King's recommendation was not the only reason for the change. Plenderleith states that he made a similar recommendation because he thought it would be simpler to carry out changes directly. Letter to writer from Plenderleith, September 27, 1970.
51. Peace River Block News, January 25, 1935.
52. Ibid., February 15, 1935. There were several districts outside the large unit under an official trustee. At the Pouce Coupe meeting Plenderleith gave the total as forty-seven and in his letter to King as forty-eight. King, 104.







53. The total expenditure for salaries was \$35,415 of which the government paid \$31,402.
54. Peace River Block News, February 15, 1935.
55. Willis to Morell, February 12, 1934 and March 29, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
56. Statutes of British Columbia, c.64, s.12 (1922).
57. R. J. Ogilvie, secretary of Fort St. John district, to Plenderleith, May 11, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
58. Alwin Holland to Plenderleith, May 11, 1935, ibid.
59. Fort St. John's mill rate for 1935 was 7.4. English, 26.
60. Plenderleith to Willis, May 27, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
61. Plenderleith to Weir, July 29, 1935, ibid.
62. Peace River Block News, February 15, 1935.
63. This question, of course, was based upon a false assumption. See Chapter III.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., February 22, 1935.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., March 1, 1935.
69. Ibid., March 8.
70. Ibid., March 22.
71. Plenderleith to Weir, July 29, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
72. As Pouce Coupe had recently come under his trusteeship, one would expect the number to be either forty-nine or forty-eight. See Footnote 50.
73. Peace River Block News, August 9, 1935.







74. Plenderleith to Willis, September 25, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD; Willis to Plenderleith, September 27, 1935, ibid.
75. The Edmonton Journal, September 16, 1935.
76. Ibid.
77. In addition to economy, Plenderleith mentioned the following improvements: salary raises for teachers, free high schooling, free night schooling, and correspondence courses.
78. Ibid., October 29.
79. Reports of Proceedings, Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1935, 29.
80. Ibid., 31.
81. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H60.
82. This reason was given by A. S. Towell, Plenderleith's successor. Vide infra.
83. Towell said that Dawson Creek was administered as a part of the unit. Vide infra. In 1936 the mill rate in the large unit was 6.0 and in Dawson Creek, 11.2. English, 26.
84. Peace River Block News, September 20, 1935.
85. Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 87-8.
86. The twelve new districts were: Peace View, Sunrise, Transpine, Erinlea, Cecil Lake, Baldonnel, Taylor Flats, Pine View, Fish Creek, Charlie Lake, Bear Flat, Forfar.
87. Ibid., 79.
88. H. G. Hadland to Weir, July 29, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
89. Hadland to Plenderleith, November 3, 1935, ibid.
90. The minutes of the meeting appear in Plenderleith, "Reorganization," Appendix 40.
91. Peace River Block News, November 22, 1935.
92. Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 80.







93. According to Jean Gething, Plenderleith sent a circular letter to all teachers requesting them to write letters, and asked teachers later if they had written. Interview with Jean Gething, July 23, 1970.
94. Nancy Craig to Plenderleith, January 14, 1936, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
95. Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 83.
96. R. A. Cheeseman to Plenderleith, December 7, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
97. Peace River Block News, November 29, 1935.
98. Ibid., December 20, 1935; Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 81.
99. Interview with Plenderleith.
100. Peace River Block News, November 29, 1935.
101. Statutes of British Columbia, 1922, c.64, s.12 (1922).
102. "Report of Revision Committee," King, 220. Plenderleith ignored the fact that the commission's technical advisor had advised against having school boards.
103. Peace River Block News, January 3, 1936.
104. This statement is true only insofar as the second stage of the plan is concerned. In any case, it hardly answers the charge, as neither the revision committee's report nor the technical advisor's report had been discussed by the legislature at this time.
105. King, 133-134.
106. According to Plenderleith, this was the amount of wood ordered to satisfy the needs of several schools in the district. Interview with Plenderleith.
107. For Peace View he promised a reduction of 52 per cent in the mill rate. For Sunrise, he promised a lower mill rate as well as re-flooring of the school and insulation of its ceiling. He assured the residents of Taylor that they would receive a new school and those at Baldonnel that their school's classroom equipment would be expanded. Peace River Block News, January 3, 1936.







108. H. G. Hadland to Weir, December 16, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
109. Three possibilities are as follows: (1) The third recommendation of the King Report was that "the tax upon personal property in non-municipal territory be abolished." King, III; (2) the third section of the revision committee's report stated that ". . . the measure of centralization or decentralization of financial control should have some relation to the financial obligations undertaken by the Provincial Government and the local district respectively." "Report of Revision Committee," ibid., 226. (3) The third recommendation in the revision committee's report concerning the organization of large units was that ". . . a scheme be worked out providing for and defining the duties of some form of School Board, partly drawn from elected representatives and partly from persons of the area chosen by the Department of Education by reason of their special fitness for such office." Ibid. The writer believes that Hadland was referring to the third possibility because it was discussed at the meeting and it presents a solution to the main grievance voiced in the Peace River during the previous year.
110. Peace River Block News, February 28, 1936. Plenderleith stressed plans for the replacement of the North Dawson School, which had burned down on February 2. The insurance on the building was almost sufficient, he estimated, to pay for a new school. It was opened on May 4. Ibid., May 8, 1936.
111. Plenderleith says that the Rolla ratepayers did not wish to join the large unit because Rolla's mill rate was very low. Interview with Plenderleith. Actually it was comparable with that of the large unit. In 1935, Rolla's mill rate was 6.5 and in 1936 it was 5.0. In 1936, its first year of operation, the large unit's rate was 6.0. English, 26.
112. Peace River Block News, October 9, 1936.
113. J. Chatfield, "Adult Education in the Peace River Block," The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 8, April 1936, 17.
114. Plenderleith, "Reorganization," 92.







115. In January he signed a letter, "J. Buran, chairman of the school board." J. Buran to Royal Canadian Mounted Police, January 13, 1936, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD; Buran to Plenderleith, December 9, 1935, ibid.
116. Buran to Royal Canadian Mounted Police, January 13, 1936, ibid. The emphasis is in the original.
117. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H63-H65.
118. Plenderleith called the closure of the four schools "consolidations." Actually, the schools (Alderdale, Valley View, East Pine, and North Swan Lake) could not have continued to operate because of their low enrolments. They were not consolidated because they were a long distance from neighboring schools and no transportation was provided. East Pine, for example, was eight miles distant from Tuscolla Mountain, the nearest school remaining open.
119. Report of Public Schools, 1935, S24.
120. Ibid., S22.
121. Morell to J. Hewitt, secretary of Rolla District, November 30, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
122. A. W. Sharp, secretary of Dawson Creek District, to Morell, October 24, 1934, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
123. Plenderleith to Willis, November 15, 1935, ibid. The lengths of the routes were thirteen, fourteen, twenty-five, and twenty-five miles respectively.
124. He said that boarding was cheaper than transportation, and that it would result in more regular attendance. Ibid.
125. Sharp to Morell, March 26, 1935, ibid.
126. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H141. In 1935 in the one-room schools of the Peace River District there were ninety children in grade eight. In the same year, there were twenty-nine children in grade eight in the graded schools. Ibid., 1935, S22-25, S84-102. The following year there were seven grade nine students in the one-room schools and twenty-nine in grade nine







in the graded schools, (Ibid., 1936, H141-142, H146-147, H219-220), of whom, on the basis of retention rates at graded schools in preceding years, it is estimated that not more than sixteen came from outside districts. Thus, the percentage of grade eight students in the ungraded schools proceeding to high school was no greater than 26 and in the graded schools no less than 45.

127. Ibid., H65.
128. Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 43.
129. Ibid.
130. Peace River Block News, November 6, 1936.
131. Interview with Plenderleith.
132. L. P. MacRae, "A Plea for Larger Administrative Units—A Rural Teacher Reports His Experiences and Observations," The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 4, December 1935, 13-17.
133. C. D. Gaitskill, "The Larger Unit of Administration and Its Application to Town Schools," ibid., volume XV, number 5, January 1936, 20-22.
134. Plenderleith to M. Anderson, August 18, 1936, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
135. E. F. Hurt and J. E. Lean, "Development of Education in the Peace River District," The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 6, February 1936, 15-16.
136. C. D. Ovans, "The Effect of the Larger Unit of Administration on a Rural Superior School," ibid., volume XV, number 7, March 1936, 26-27.
137. J. Chatfield, "Adult Education in the Peace River Block," ibid., volume XV, number 8, April 1936, 17.
138. J. S. Cull, "Health Services under the Larger Units of Administration," ibid., volume XVI, number 1, September 1936, 16-19.
139. W. A. Plenderleith, "The Efficiency of the Peace River Plan," ibid., volume XVI, number 2, October 1936, 82-83.







140. The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 3, November 1935, 44; Plenderleith to F. A. McLellan, October 8, 1935, Correspondence of Official Trustee, ASPRSD.
141. The B.C. Teacher, volume XV, number 2, October 1935, 34.
142. Ibid., volume XV, number 5, January 1936, 3.
143. B. B. Thorsteinsson, "Some Thoughts on Centralization," ibid., volume XV, number 9, May 1936, 27-9.
144. Peace River Block News, March 12, 1937.
145. Ibid., March 19, 1937.
146. Ibid., April 2, 1937.
147. Ibid., April 9, 1937.
148. Ibid., April 16, 1937.
149. Ibid., July 2, 1937.
150. Mrs. Ross Smith of North Pine said that it was very difficult for the official trustee to visit the region north of Fort St. John. Interview with Mrs. Ross Smith, July 23, 1970.
151. Peace River Block News, March 12, 1937.
152. This criterion was used by Jonason in his study: J. C. Jonason, "The Large Units of School Administration in Alberta" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Oregon University, 1951), 12. King apparently agreed with this criterion: "Favorable public opinion is a requisite for the carrying on of governmental activity." King, 113.
153. Interview with Plenderleith.
154. Averages were obtained from Report of Public Schools, 1934, N20-25, N84-101; ibid., 1937, I25, I112-117, I189-190.
155. The B.C. Teacher, volume XVI, number 7, March 1937, 318. The Department was reported as being "impressed" with the B.C.T.F.'s case in favor of higher salaries.







156. Obtained from information in Report of Public Schools,  
1935, S21-26, S84-102; ibid., 1936,  
H144-149, H219-220.
157. English, 19.
158. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H65.
159. Interview with Oscar Palsson, June 20, 1970;  
interview with Jean Gething.
160. Philip Sheffield's report to the British Columbia  
School Trustees, Report of Proceedings,  
Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 32.







## CHAPTER VI

### FURTHER DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

1935 - 1937

In 1935 the government organized a second large unit, the Abbotsford School District in the Lower Fraser Valley. It differed from the Peace River School District notably in the union of two district municipalities with a village and two rural areas. Elsewhere, between 1935 and 1937 several consolidated and "united" districts were also formed.

#### 1. The Abbotsford School District

The Peace River large unit had been established primarily to solve what the Department of Education considered a serious problem of maladministration. Specifically, the people were considered incapable of managing schools economically, of electing qualified trustees, of appointing suitable teachers, of maintaining school property, and even of keeping simple records. There was no suggestion that the boards in the Abbotsford area were incompetent. A secondary purpose of the reorganization of the Peace was the primary and sole purpose of the reorganization at Abbotsford; namely, the setting-up of a model for the rest of the province. The description of the Abbotsford area, therefore, will not be as extensive as that of the Peace River District.







## The Lower Fraser Valley

The Lower Fraser Valley, including Vancouver, extends from the village of Hope, approximately a hundred miles west of Vancouver, to the Strait of Georgia. It is bounded on the north by the Coast Mountains and on the south by the Cascade Mountains and the United States border. Its width varies from a mile at Hope to about twenty miles at the mouth of the Fraser River. The area of the valley is<sup>1</sup> approximately seventeen hundred square miles. In this relatively small area in 1931 lived<sup>2</sup> over 50 per cent of British Columbia's inhabitants. Three quarters of the people of the Lower Fraser Valley lived<sup>3</sup> in urban areas, chiefly in metropolitan Vancouver.

Generally speaking, the chief function of the rural area in the eastern part of the valley was to supply the urban area in the west with agricultural products. By 1941 three hundred and thirty thousand acres of farmland had been cleared.<sup>4</sup> According to G. R. Winter, the valley has<sup>5</sup> no "really first-class agricultural soils." Another problem faced by farmers was that one hundred and seventy-five thousand acres were subject<sup>6</sup> to flooding.

Two transcontinental railway lines ran through the Lower Fraser Valley in 1935, the Canadian Pacific north of the river and the Canadian National to the south. In addition, the valley had its "own railway," the B.C. Electric Railway, which ran from New Westminster to Chilliwack. The







valley was well served by roads. (See Figs. 10 - 13.)

The chief highways, the Trans-Canada and the Loughheed were almost completely paved<sup>7</sup> by 1931.

In 1935 there were <sup>8</sup> twenty-six municipalities in the area: six cities, sixteen district municipalities, and four villages. All of the cities and district municipalities had been incorporated<sup>9</sup> for over thirty years.

### The Abbotsford Area

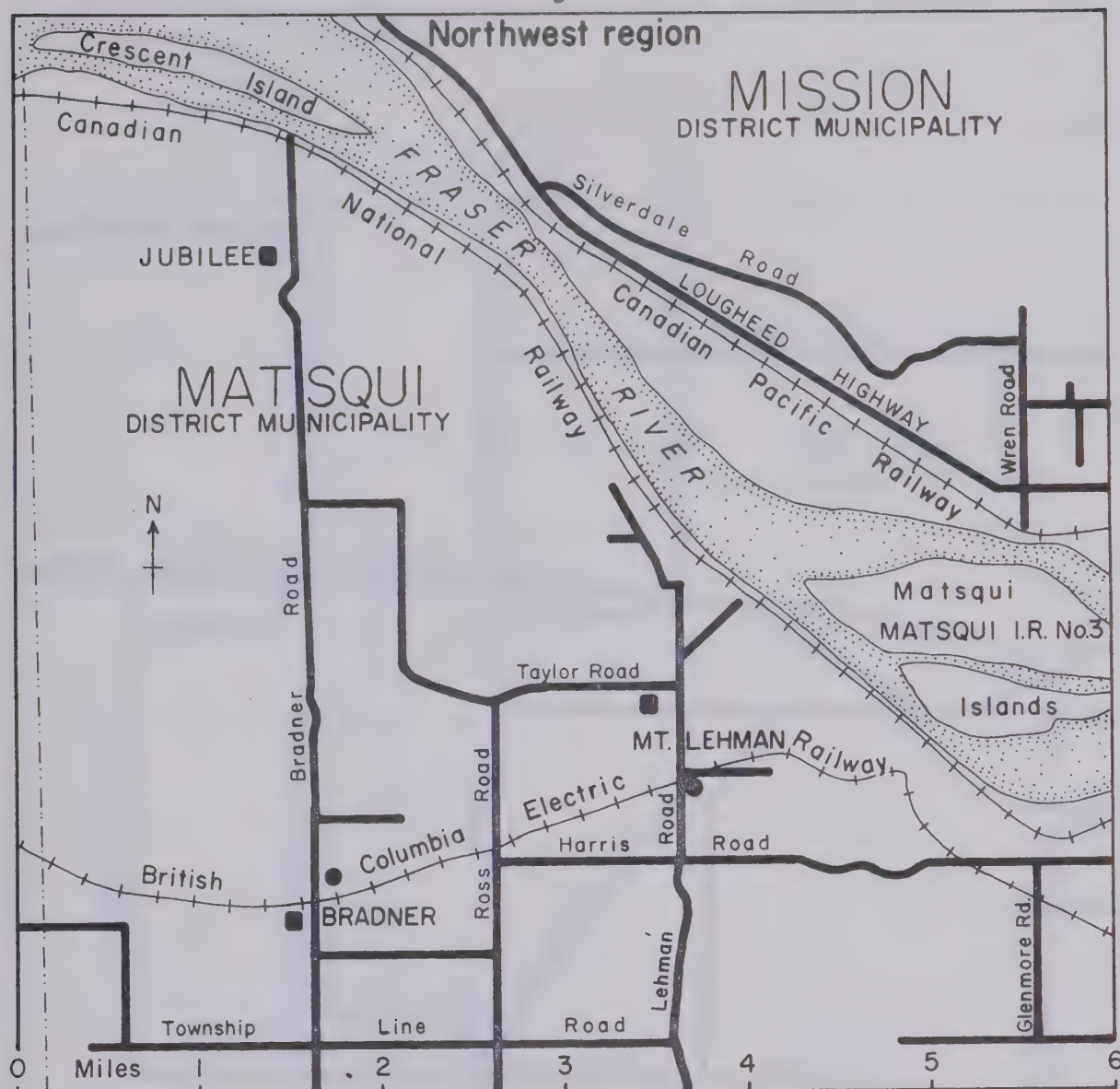
The village of Abbotsford was located on the Trans-Canada Highway forty-five miles east of Vancouver and eighteen miles west of Chilliwack. Adjoining the village were two district municipalities, Matsqui and Sumas, both incorporated in 1892. The areas and populations of the three municipalities in 1931 were:<sup>10</sup> Matsqui—54,165 acres, 3835 population; Sumas—34,000 acres, 1812 population; Abbotsford—160 acres, 510 population. Abbotsford was the business and shopping centre of the area. Most of the soil of Sumas is classified as "good" but most of it is subject<sup>11</sup> to flooding. Most of Matsqui's soil is classified as "medium" and "fair to poor" but is relatively safe<sup>12</sup> from flooding. The chief crops of Sumas in 1935 were<sup>13</sup> hops, peas, tobacco, and sugar beets. There were large herds of dairy cattle, and a milk plant produced<sup>14</sup> three hundred and fifty thousand cases of canned milk annually. Matsqui specialized<sup>15</sup> in the production of milk, poultry, strawberries, raspberries, and







Fig. 10



### The Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Area, 1937

■ School

● Post Office

----- Boundary: District Municipality

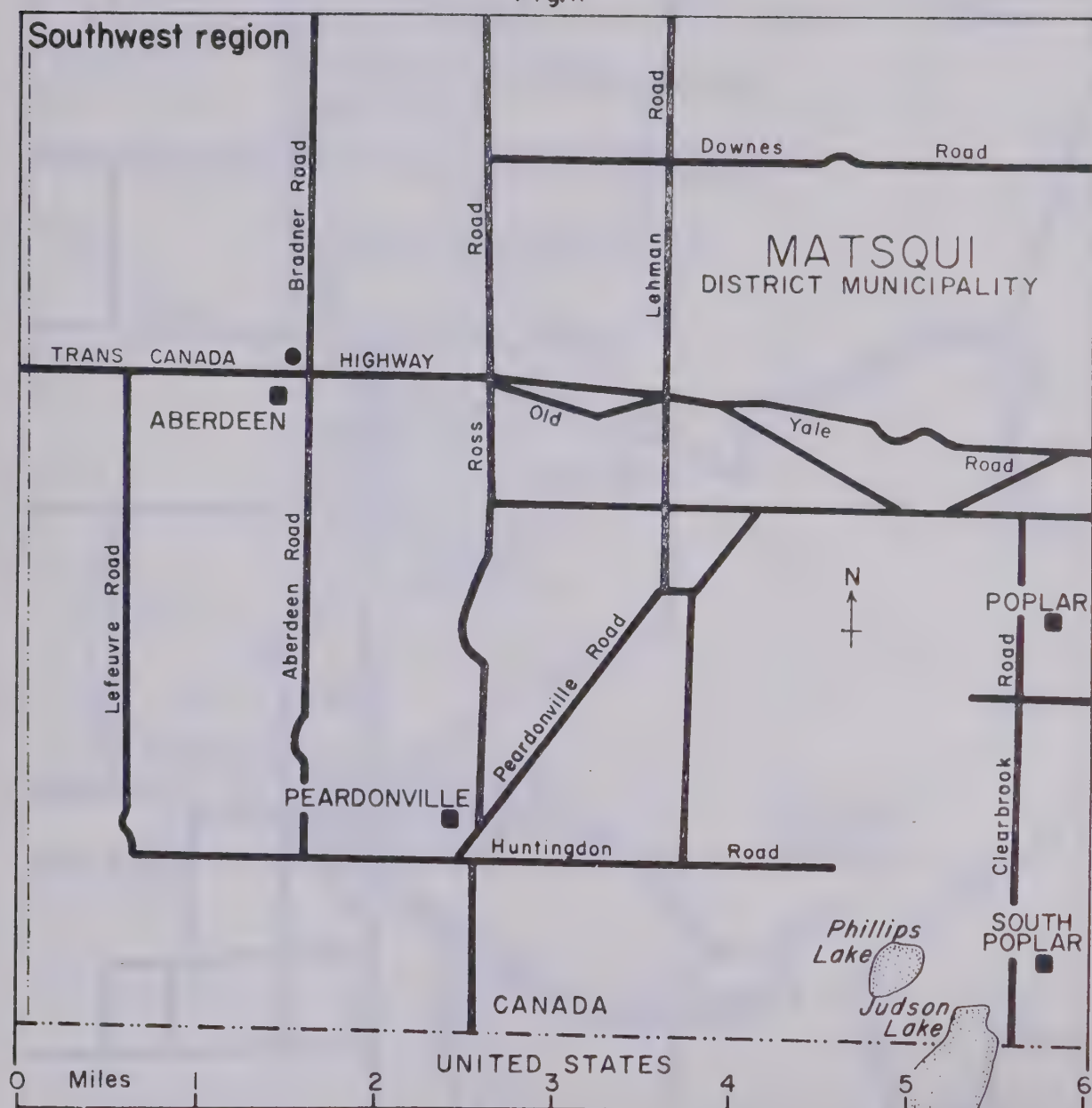
The maps on the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Area were based upon a map of the "Central Fraser Valley" by Abbotsford and Tunbridge, British Columbia Land Surveyors, copyrighted 1957, and upon maps in A. H. Siemens (ed.), Lower Fraser Valley: Evolution of a Cultural Landscape (Vancouver, Tantalus, 1966). The writer is also indebted to the editor and staff of the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, who helped him locate the school sites.







Fig. II









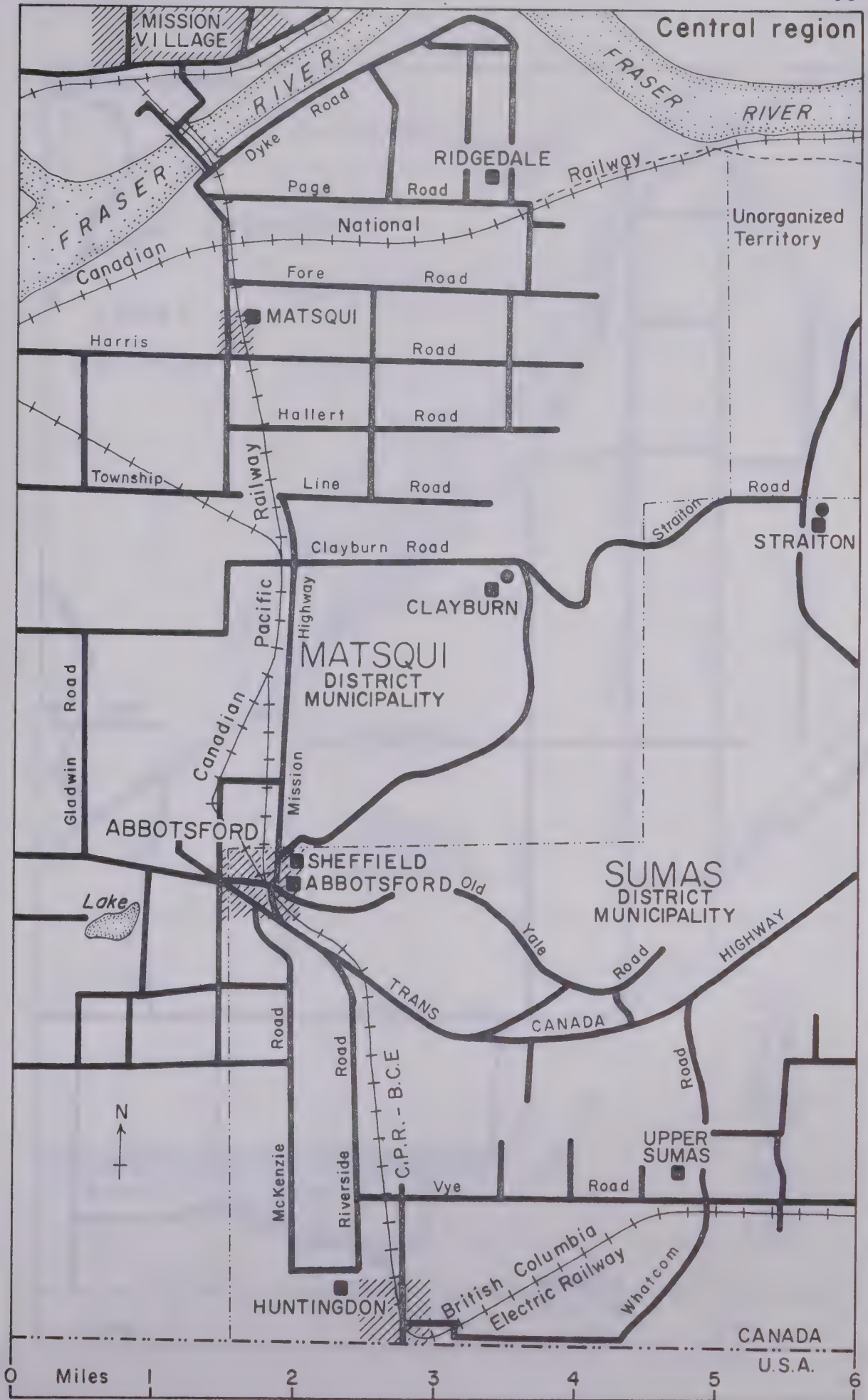
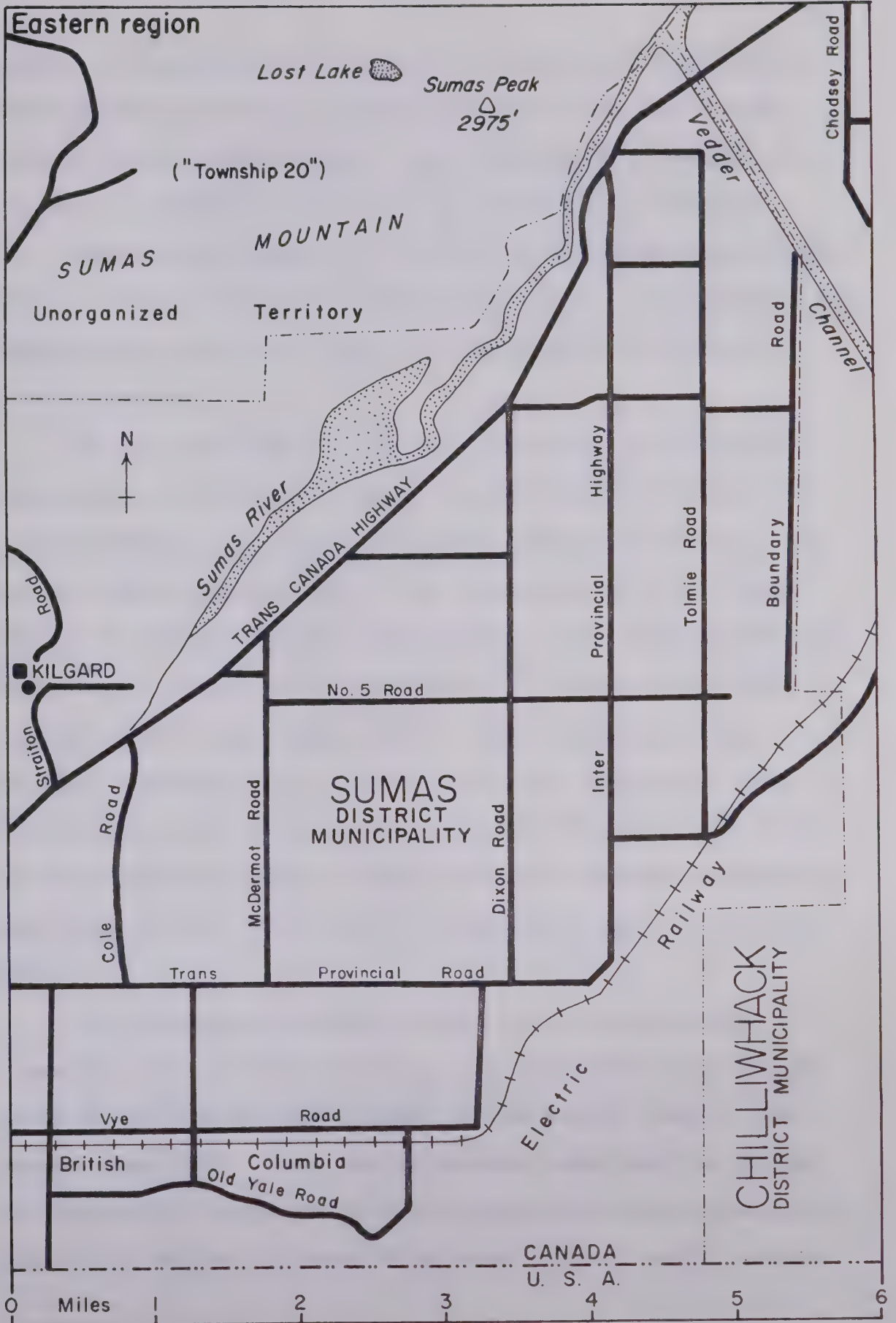








Fig.13









bulbs. A comparison of temperatures and precipitation in Abbotsford with those of New Westminster and Chilliwack (Tables XV and XVI) suggests that Abbotsford's climate is relatively typical of that of the Lower Fraser Valley.

Matsqui and Sumas were among the original rural municipality school districts organized in 1906. (See Chapter II.) Abbotsford, being a village, was classified as a rural school district.

As will be seen in the next section, the government introduced centralized control of the schools of the area because Matsqui and Sumas requested special financial aid. Was the area impoverished? One criterion is the average amount of taxable property per person. The figures for the three municipalities for 1935 were:<sup>16</sup> Abbotsford, \$709; Matsqui, \$803; and Sumas, \$943. For comparison, the average assessment per capita in all the municipal areas of the province was \$1122 and for the district municipalities of the province, \$1059. Three districts besides Matsqui in the Lower Fraser Valley had<sup>17</sup> assessments per capita under \$900.

The Abbotsford area, located in the most highly organized part of the province, was relatively typical of other Lower Fraser Valley rural areas except that it was poorer than most. Thus the government was wise to choose the Abbotsford area for a pilot project in centralized control if it wanted to prove that such control could succeed







TABLE XV  
MEAN DAILY TEMPERATURES FOR ABBOTSFORD AND TWO  
CITIES IN THE LOWER FRASER VALLEY★  
(in degrees Fahrenheit)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	
Abbotsford (2)	34.9	38.5	43.0	48.6	54.4	59.4	
Chilliwack (2)	34.8	38.7	43.1	49.7	55.7	60.5	
New Westminster (1)	36.4	39.2	43.3	49.7	56.0	60.2	
	J	A	S	O	N	D	Yr.
Abbotsford (2)	62.7	62.8	58.4	50.6	42.2	38.5	49.5
Chilliwack (2)	64.4	64.0	60.0	51.7	42.8	38.6	49.9
New Westminster (1)	64.4	63.9	59.5	51.4	42.8	39.0	50.5

★Source: Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Temperature and Precipitation Tables for British Columbia, Volume I (Toronto, 1967).

(1) Based on records of from twenty-five to thirty years between 1931-1960.

(2) Based on records of ten years adjusted to the standard normal period 1931-1960.







TABLE XVI  
PRECIPITATION FOR ABBOTSFORD AND TWO  
CITIES IN THE LOWER FRASER VALLEY\*

	J	F	M	A	M	J	
Abbotsford (2)	7.7	6.9	5.9	4.0	2.9	2.7	
Chilliwack (1)	9.1	6.8	6.3	4.2	3.6	3.0	
New Westminster (1)	8.4	6.2	5.7	3.6	2.8	2.7	

	J	A	S	O	N	D	Yr.
Abbotsford (2)	1.3	1.7	3.0	6.7	7.4	8.1	58.5
Chilliwack (1)	1.8	2.0	4.2	7.9	8.4	9.6	66.9
New Westminster	1.5	1.8	3.3	6.6	7.5	9.3	59.5

\*Source: Canada, Department of Transport, Meteorological Branch, Temperature and Precipitation Tables for British Columbia, Volume I (Toronto, 1967).

(1) Based on records of twenty-five to thirty years between 1931-1960.

(2) Based on records of from ten to twenty-five years between 1931-1960. No adjustment factors were used. As amounts were adjusted to the nearest tenth, totals are slightly inconsistent with the sums of the monthly figures.







in a municipal area and if it were prepared to give special financial aid. In view of H. B. King's stated priorities (See Chapter III), however, one wonders if a more typical rural area could not have been found.

### Financial Difficulties

In 1935 many Matsqui settlers did not pay their taxes, outstanding arrears amounting to \$25,013. The school mill rate of twelve was<sup>18</sup> one of the highest in the Lower Fraser Valley. Settlers in the recently opened Poplar-Peardonville area, for the most part unable to pay their taxes, increased<sup>19</sup> the enrolment of the Matsqui schools by one hundred and ten. In April the ratepayers rejected,<sup>20</sup> two hundred and thirty-eight to twenty-one, a by-law for \$5000 to accommodate the new children. Meanwhile, the Matsqui municipal council initiated<sup>21</sup> arbitration proceedings to reduce the ordinary estimates of the school board. The arbitration board cut the estimates of \$16,284 by \$1925.<sup>22</sup>

In Sumas, where many settlers in the recently reclaimed lands of Sumas Lake area also were unable to meet their obligations, arrears totalled<sup>23</sup> \$43,111. Despite a rate of only seven mills,<sup>24</sup> Trustee Harry Day stated that educational costs had exceeded revenue by \$11,556 in a four-year period.<sup>25</sup>

### The Establishment of the Large Unit

Several delegations of municipal and school board officials from Sumas and Matsqui sought<sup>26</sup> assistance from







Premier T. Dufferin Pattullo and Education Minister George Weir. The second Sumas delegation reported<sup>27</sup> that Pattullo had promised a satisfactory solution. The first indication of the type of solution planned came from H. B. King, Weir's technical advisor. At an Abbotsford meeting in June, King said:<sup>28</sup>

It is tentatively planned to amalgamate the present municipal districts of Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui into one provincial school area, and responsibility for all school taxes, and their expenditure will be placed in government hands, possibly with a local advisory committee.

More accurately, the plan was to unite the district municipality school districts of Matsqui and Sumas with the rural school district of Abbotsford and two other rural areas. (See Appendix G.) As in the Peace River's first phase of reorganization, there would be no common mill rate. (See Chapter V.) Matsqui, Sumas, and the rural portion would each be a taxation area.

The Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News announced<sup>29</sup> that the "worry-weary" trustees favored the plan because without it Matsqui would be forced either to close its high schools or "withhold facilities" in the Poplar-Peardonville area and because Sumas would not have sufficient money even if all taxes were paid. The Abbotsford board, though solvent, was reportedly sympathetic toward the plan. The editor asked his readers to "consider" these questions:

- (a) Would a "commissioner" direct affairs any better?
- (b) Would there be political influence?







- (c) Would minor economies compensate for loss of local control?
- (d) Would government control be relinquished if the ratepayers desired?
- (e) "Is it probable that having forced the two local boards to their knees by loading financial burdens upon the district through callous land settlement projects, that the government will be in a favorable position to hail the experiment as a success, and to use this to propagandize the rest of the province into giving their education birthrights for a mess of administrative pottage?"
- (f) Might this scheme not be the "thin edge of the wedge for the government to take over municipal affairs also?"
- (g) "Are we not top-heavy with government as it is?"
- (h) Could the problem not be solved by a special grant to impoverished areas?

The editor concluded: "We don't like the drift of this scheme and would warn ratepayers to deliberate carefully before permitting it to become effective." There were no letters to the editor or reports of reader response in subsequent issues.

By August the editor realized<sup>30</sup> that the government planned to proceed without consulting the ratepayers. He said that the school boards were "not justified" in surrendering control to "governmental officialdom." The plan, he said, "[would] eventuate as one of the greatest mistakes ever made in the school affairs in this province. . . ."

The Department of Education named<sup>31</sup> Philip Sheffield official trustee of the large unit. Upon his arrival at







Abbotsford in September, Sheffield stated<sup>32</sup> that in recent years many districts had been placed under official trustees either because ratepayers were dissatisfied or because it was impossible to obtain qualified trustees. He added that the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford plan was the first instance in the province, and probably on the continent, of municipalities being placed under an official trustee.

J. P. Carr, a Matsqui trustee and a former president of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, told<sup>33</sup> the annual trustees' convention in September of the events preceding the appointment of an official trustee. He stated that he had advised King not to form "an experimental unit" because he thought that the people would oppose it. Carr said that the experiment could not prove the superiority of an official trustee over an elected board because ". . . he [was] not working under the same conditions [that the boards] worked under." What would be proven, he believed, was that a better education was possible in rural areas.

In March 1936 an act of the legislature redefined the boundaries of the Abbotsford School District to include all of the area in the large unit; that is, the district municipalities of Sumas and Matsqui, the village of Abbotsford, the townsite of Huntingdon, and the Sumas Mountain area ("Township 20").<sup>34</sup> (See Appendix G and Figs. 10 - 13.) The government appeared uncertain as to who should control the district: "The person at present holding office as







Official Trustee of Abbotsford School District shall continue in office . . . until either another person is appointed as Official Trustee . . . or a Board of School Trustees is elected. . . ." The act stipulated that Sumas, Matsqui, and the rural portion would each comprise a taxation area, and fixed the total 1936 taxes for Sumas and Matsqui. Beginning in 1937, each area's share of the taxes was to be determined by the Official Trustee "on the basis of the proportionate number of pupils" in the area.

For the Abbotsford School District to qualify as an "educational administrative area," it was necessary for a vote to be taken. (See Appendix C.) Before the vote it appears that King or Sheffield made<sup>35</sup> two promises: that there would be no increase in taxes for three years and that after the three years, another vote would be held as to whether the large area should continue. At meetings in twelve centres, Sheffield explained<sup>36</sup> the organization of the unit, emphasizing the taxation policy. Only two negative votes were cast. In July the Abbotsford District became<sup>37</sup> the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford (M.S.A.) Educational Administrative Area.

A health plan similar to the one in the Peace River was established.<sup>38</sup> The former boards acted<sup>39</sup> as an advisory committee and often met with Sheffield. The government provided<sup>40</sup> new buildings for \$7500 instead of the estimated \$10,000, and supplied<sup>41</sup> a special grant of \$4683.75 during







the large unit's first year. Work was begun<sup>42</sup> on a new high school in Abbotsford.

### The Unit's Second Year

Illness prevented Sheffield from attending the September 1936 trustees' convention, but he sent<sup>43</sup> a report which was read. It referred to a "remarkable professional revival" — the high school curriculum had been enriched and many new library books had been purchased. The report concluded:<sup>44</sup> "What are we interested in—the despotism of Boards or the welfare of children? . . . I am enthusiastic about this scheme and will do everything in my power to not only keep it but to extend it."

J. P. Carr told<sup>45</sup> the trustees that he had been the only member of the original boards to vote against the plan. He stated that the large area rather than the official trusteeship had caused the economies. ". . . It is an experiment to prove or attempt to prove to the people the advantages of having a large area, and of having a professional director in sole charge. . . ." How could one decide which benefits arose from which cause? Carr added that the public meetings had been small and unrepresentative. At one of them there were only twelve people, five of whom were teachers. Furthermore, he claimed,<sup>46</sup> the opinions of many residents were "clouded" by the success of the health plan made possible by special grants from the Rockefeller







Institute and the Department of Health. (See Chapter V.) Only by paying the entire cost of education, Carr concluded, would the Department of Education have some justification for its scheme. Weir's representative, Mrs. Paul Smith, M.L.A., replied<sup>47</sup> that the plan was a form of decentralization as the director was given "a very great deal of authority that formerly belonged to Victoria."

Sheffield died in October. The Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News said<sup>48</sup> that he had held meetings throughout the district, placated sectional jealousies, improved school buildings, enlarged the curriculum, and reorganized and enlarged the teaching staff. Sheffield's successor, William Plenderleith, arrived<sup>49</sup> in Abbotsford the next month.

Twelve hundred people attended<sup>50</sup> the official opening in December of the new Abbotsford high school, which was named the Philip Sheffield Memorial High School. "Philip Sheffield still lives," declared George Weir. "This, his building, marks the beginning of a new Philosophy of Education—an experiment, undoubtedly the first of its kind on the continent—and tonight marks an historic epoch in education in British Columbia." Weir called Plenderleith "the real pioneer of the new system" in the Peace River District. Weir stated <sup>51</sup> that 95 per cent of the people of the Peace River supported the plan. "Mark my words, the new system will demonstrate its validity as time goes on." Mrs. Edward Mahon, vice-president of the British Columbia







Trustees, said, "We are watching this experiment critically but not antagonistically." She added that her association favored larger units but believed that ". . . the voice of the people should not be lost."

In January 1937 the reeves of both Sumas and Matsqui, who were seeking re-election, commended the large unit. Reeve Alex Hughes of Sumas said:<sup>52</sup> "The new school system appears to be working out satisfactorily and many things are being done to give the boys and girls a better outlook on life and train them for better citizenship." In a list published<sup>53</sup> by the Matsqui reeve's campaign committee under the heading "What Matsqui's Reeve George A. Cruikshank Has Done," was the item: "In collaboration with the Government now sitting all municipal school buildings [are] in better condition at no cost to ratepayers."

After the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News had a change<sup>54</sup> of editors in February, its policy became more sympathetic toward the large unit. When S. J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, and John Kyle, Director of Technical Education, visited Abbotsford in May, the paper said:<sup>55</sup> "The residents of this district should feel highly honored by this visit from Dr. Willis, as it is well known that he leaves his office in Victoria only on very special occasions."

The health unit announced<sup>56</sup> that in the year 1936 to 1937 almost all of the fifteen hundred and two children had







been examined and almost nine hundred given dental treatment. There had been over three hundred nurse-parent conferences.

Presumably Plenderleith estimated the district's financial needs early in 1937 as required of him under the Abbotsford School District Act Amendment Act. (See Appendix G.) The government was displeased<sup>57</sup> with the rising costs of the plan. In spite of King's alleged assurance that taxes would not be raised, either Plenderleith or the government raised<sup>58</sup> the Sumas mill rate from seven to ten but left the Matsqui rate at twelve. It is possible that governmental opposition to costs was responsible for Willis' visit in May. Plenderleith decided<sup>59</sup> to make drastic economies. He would send<sup>60</sup> all grade ten, eleven, and twelve students to Philip Sheffield High School, enrol<sup>61</sup> grade nine pupils at "superior schools" at Abbotsford, Mt. Lehman, and Matsqui, and reduce the teaching staff by eight through consolidations and large classes. Plenderleith estimated<sup>62</sup> that the changes would result in a saving of \$8000. In June Plenderleith addressed<sup>63</sup> several meetings concerning the plan. To effect the changes, Plenderleith transferred thirteen teachers (See Table XVII) and dismissed<sup>64</sup> several others.

According to the local paper, "something of a furor" was caused<sup>65</sup> when teachers received details concerning their next year's teaching assignments. Seventeen teachers in the district protested<sup>66</sup> to the B.C.T.F. After investigating, Harry Charlesworth, general secretary, informed<sup>67</sup> Superintendent S. J. Willis in July that the B.C.T.F. supported







TABLE XVII

## THE 1937 REORGANIZATION OF THE M.S.S. AREA\*

1936-1937		Plenderleith's Plan (Incomplete)		1937-1938	
Schools and Teachers	Salaries	Schools and Teachers		Schools and Teachers	Salaries
<u>Matsqui High</u>		<u>Matsqui Superior</u>		<u>Matsqui High</u>	
H. Herlihy	\$1300	Miss E. Nordberg		Miss G. Hurum	\$1250
R. Topper	1300	Miss J. Henry		<u>Matsqui Elementary</u>	
Miss E. Lehman	1200	K. Reid			
		Miss E. Cameron		Miss E. Cameron	900
		Miss E. Carlson		Miss E. Carlson	1150
		E. Prasloski		E. Prasloski	900
				K. Reid	820
				Miss J. Henry	820
<u>Matsqui Elementary</u>					
Miss E. Carlson	950				
E. Prasloski	810				
Miss J. Henry	810				
Miss L. Rowntree	810				
<u>Mt. Lehman High</u>		<u>Mt. Lehman Superior</u>		<u>Mt. Lehman Superior</u>	
Miss E. Piggett	1350	R. Topper		R. Topper	1100
Miss E. Nordberg	1200	Miss L. Owen		Miss L. Owen	900
Miss G. Hurum	1200			Miss J. Wallach	830
<u>Philip Sheffield High</u>		<u>Philip Sheffield High</u>		<u>Philip Sheffield High</u>	
E. Burton	1300	E. Burton		E. Burton	1450
J. Parnall	1200	J. Parnall		J. Parnall	1250
G. York	1200	G. York		G. York	1250
A. Stradiotti	1200	A. Stradiotti		A. Stradiotti	1250
Miss F. White	1200	Miss E. Piggett		Miss E. Piggett	1400
T. A. Quayle	1200	Miss E. Lehman		Miss E. Lehman	1520
P. Kazoolim				Miss F. White	1250
(part-time)	755			T. A. Quayle	1250
<u>Abbotsford Elementary</u>		<u>Abbotsford Superior</u>		<u>Abbotsford Superior</u>	
Miss M. Stenerson	1250	Miss M. Stenerson		Miss M. Stenerson	1250
H. McDonald	1000	H. McDonald		H. McDonald	1050
Miss V. Baker	900	Miss V. Baker		Miss V. Baker	900
Miss N. McPhee	900	Miss N. McPhee		Miss N. McPhee	900
A. Buck	830	A. Buck		A. Buck	850
Miss J. McLeod	820	Miss J. McLeod		Miss J. McLeod	900
Miss V. Hunt	900	Miss V. Hunt		Miss V. Hunt	900
		Miss L. Rowntree		M. Hall	820







TABLE XVII (continued)

1936-1937		Plenderleith's Plan (Incomplete)	1937-1938	
Schools and Teachers	Salaries	Schools and Teachers	Schools and Teachers	Salaries
<u>Aberdeen Elementary</u>		<u>Aberdeen Elementary</u>	<u>Aberdeen Elementary</u>	
W. Damen	820	Pennington	Miss A. Blatchford	930
Miss B. McDonald	810	Miss B. McDonald	Miss B. McDonald	820
			J. Stack	820
<u>Bradner Elementary</u>			<u>Bradner Elementary</u>	
W. McRae	930		W. McRae	950
Miss O. M. Fore	810		Miss E. Catto	820
<u>Mt. Lehman Elementary</u>			<u>Mt. Lehman Elementary</u>	
Miss J. Wallach	820		D. Heath	820
Miss E. Catto	800		Miss F.R. Whiteway	820
<u>Kilgard Elementary</u>		<u>Kilgard Elementary</u>	<u>Kilgard Elementary</u>	
Miss A. Blatchford	950	Miss A. Blatchford	Miss A. L. Steven-	900
Miss J. Marshall	820		son	
<u>Clayburn Elementary</u>			<u>Clayburn Elementary</u>	
Miss H. Bain	810		(closed)	
<u>Highlands Elementary</u>			<u>Highlands Elementary</u>	
Miss L. Owen	810		(closed)	
<u>Huntingdon Elementary</u>		<u>Huntingdon Elementary</u>	<u>Huntingdon Elementary</u>	
E. Greyell	950	E. Greyell	E. Greyell	950
Miss M. Farrow	850		Miss M. Farrow	850
<u>Jubilee Elementary</u>		<u>Jubilee Elementary</u>	<u>Jubilee Elementary</u>	
Miss M. Blackmore	810	L. Lawley	L. Lawley	830







TABLE XVII (continued)

1936-1937		Plenderleith's Plan (Incomplete)		1937-1938	
Schools and Teachers	Salaries	Schools and Teachers		Schools and Teachers	Salaries
<u>Upper Sumas</u> <u>Elementary</u>		<u>Upper Sumas</u> <u>Elementary</u>		<u>Upper Sumas</u> <u>Elementary</u>	
T. Lindsay	1000	T. Lindsay		T. Lindsay	1100
Miss T. Grieve	900	Miss T. Grieve		Miss T. Grieve	960
K. Reid	810	H. Bain		H. Bain	820
Miss E. Chase	850			Miss E. Church	820
Miss J. Short	820			Miss J. Short	820
<u>Straiton Elementary</u>		<u>Straiton Elementary</u>		<u>Straiton Elementary</u>	
Miss E. Horsely	900	Miss E. Horsely		K. Parnell	900
<u>South Poplar</u> <u>Elementary</u>		<u>South Poplar</u> <u>Elementary</u>		<u>South Poplar</u> <u>Elementary</u>	
L. Lawley	810	Miss J. Duncan		Miss M. Hind	830
<u>Peardonville</u> <u>Elementary</u>				<u>Peardonville</u> <u>Elementary</u>	
J. Reid	820			J. Reid	900
Miss T. Bates	795			Miss J. Duncan	820
<u>Popular Elementary</u>				<u>Poplar Elementary</u>	
Miss A. Olund	820			Miss A. Olund	900
Miss E. Cameron	900			W. Wickett	820
J. Tibbutt	800			J. Tibbitt	820

\* Sources: British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1937-1938 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1937-1938), II03, II58-9, JI01, JI10, JI58-9; Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, July 21, 1937.







large units but had "certain fears which [had] now materialized in such a serious form as to jeopardize the whole success of the plan." An early fear which still remained, even though "some slight improvement" had been effected by King, was that of low salaries and lack of increments. At a meeting with Abbotsford teachers, four conclusions had been reached:<sup>68</sup> the large administrative area was sound in principle; benefits and progress depended "almost entirely on the kind of administration given by the director"; and although ". . . the plan had been very satisfactory" under Sheffield, 85 per cent of the teachers were now "dissatisfied, discontented, and discouraged." Charlesworth contended<sup>69</sup> that Plenderleith was more interested in buildings and grounds than in teaching efficiency. Reports on teachers, he continued, were based upon visits of approximately thirty minutes each, during which achievement tests were administered. The inspector used a system which he called "scientific" to classify 5 per cent of the teachers as excellent, 20 per cent as good, 50 per cent as average, 20 per cent as fair, and 5 per cent as poor. Charlesworth doubted the wisdom of using this system with a teaching system of only fifty. Furthermore, he stated, any scientific basis was destroyed by using the qualifying adverb "only" before "average" in many reports; for example, "Miss Jones is doing only average work." Other complaints were<sup>70</sup> that Plenderleith judged teachers on the basis of achievement







tests, showed little "human sympathy" with the discharged teachers, and issued unnecessarily "elaborate and detailed instructions." Charlesworth charged<sup>71</sup> that Plenderleith demoted teachers and reclassified schools to effect economies. The violation of the principle of local democratic control, Charlesworth added,<sup>72</sup> had "undoubtedly prevented [the large unit's] more rapid adoption and development." Under "wise and proper guidance," however, the charge of autocracy "could be shown to be unmerited." A "combination of democratic control and professional direction" was possible. A study of inspector's reports on ten teachers appended to the memorandum reveals that in most cases Plenderleith's ratings were considerably lower than those of previous inspectors.

Late in August Plenderleith returned from New Brunswick where he had been directing an educational survey of King's County. He and H. B. King met<sup>73</sup> with the advisory committee in Abbotsford. Although the meeting was closed, the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News said that it was caused by teacher dissatisfaction with transfers and salary changes. The News anticipated that the Department of Education would make "changes in the assignments." An advisory committee member stated after the meeting, "Unless something is done, it [Plenderleith's plan] will wreck the experiment here." The Department of Education allowed Matsqui to retain a high school although it was much smaller than before. The teaching staff was reduced by only one instead of eight. It is







also possible that the Department raised some of the salaries set by Plenderleith. (Table XVII reveals that only two teachers staying on staff suffered salary reductions.) Plenderleith was transferred to Nanaimo.

Probably the greatest long-range effect of Plenderleith's attempted reorganization was to strengthen the impression already produced by the low salaries in the Peace River (See Chapter V) that Weir's plan for large districts effected economies at the expense of the teachers. The average teacher's salary in the districts entering the large unit was \$918 compared with a provincial average of \$1300. The gap widened slightly in the next two years, the increase being 4.1 per cent in the large unit compared with 6.7 per cent in the entire province.<sup>74</sup> In 1937 the editor of the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News said<sup>75</sup> that salaries were among the lowest in British Columbia.

Besides economical administration, Plenderleith considered<sup>76</sup> that the principal achievements in the M.S.A. Area were "practical" high school courses, consolidations and district ownership of buses, the health unit, physical and recreational activities, handicraft classes, and a musical and dramatic festival.

### Conclusion

The evident enthusiasm for the large unit in Matsqui, Sumas, and Abbotsford, is in marked contrast to the early







opposition to, and later grudging acceptance of, the scheme in the Peace River. There are several reasons for this difference. First, there was a financial crisis in Matsqui and Sumas. The Peace River districts were largely shielded from the economic stresses of the depression by the government's generosity. In 1932 only three districts were classified<sup>77</sup> as regularly organized. The others, as assisted school districts, paid no share of their teachers' salaries. Even with the classification of all rural districts as regularly organized the next year, the government continued to pay the greater part of school costs. Second, as Paul Sharp has shown,<sup>78</sup> there was a tendency for many farmers in western Canada to want to keep government as close to home as possible. This was especially so in the Peace River where isolation caused<sup>79</sup> suspicion of the rest of British Columbia and especially of the "coast cities" of Vancouver and Victoria. Third, the multiplicity of districts gave many people a vested interest in the small unit system. Fourth, unlike Matsqui, Sumas, and Abbotsford, which had municipal councils, the Peace River had only one institution of local self-government, the school board. Jean Gething said,<sup>80</sup> "When school boards were abolished, the people felt that everything was being taken away from them." A study of these reasons reveals the government's dilemma: opposition to reorganization was likely to be strongest where the need was the greatest.







## 2. Consolidated and United Districts

One consolidated and four united school districts were formed in 1936 and 1937 under the section of the Public School Act permitting boards to unite under an elected board for the purpose of establishing a central school. (See Chapter II.) The Department of Education now permitted boards to unite under this section whether or not there was a central school. Thus the "consolidated" district of North Saanich on Vancouver Island, enrolling two hundred and twenty-five pupils and employing eight teachers, kept<sup>81</sup> all of its original schools open. Probably because of this new practice, from 1937 on, new larger districts were given the more accurate title of "united districts."

A meeting of the North, South, and East Gabriola ratepayers voted<sup>82</sup> unanimously to combine. As a result, all of Gabriola Island, which is located east of Nanaimo, became<sup>83</sup> a single district. The Gabriola United Superior School served the island, enrolling<sup>84</sup> forty-six pupils and employing two teachers. Ratepayers at Annie Lake, Lang Bay, and Kelly Creek on Vancouver Island voted<sup>85</sup> to form the Stillwater United Rural School District. There were<sup>86</sup> sixty-two children and two teachers at the central school. Only slightly larger was the Yahk United Rural School District in the Kootenays organized<sup>87</sup> to include three small districts. All of the district's seventy-four children attended<sup>88</sup> a single school which had a teaching







staff of three. The largest of the united districts, the Creston Valley United School District was<sup>89</sup> a union of seven districts in the Kootenays. Most of the schools in the district remained open<sup>90</sup> and were attended by six hundred and thirty-four children and twenty teachers.

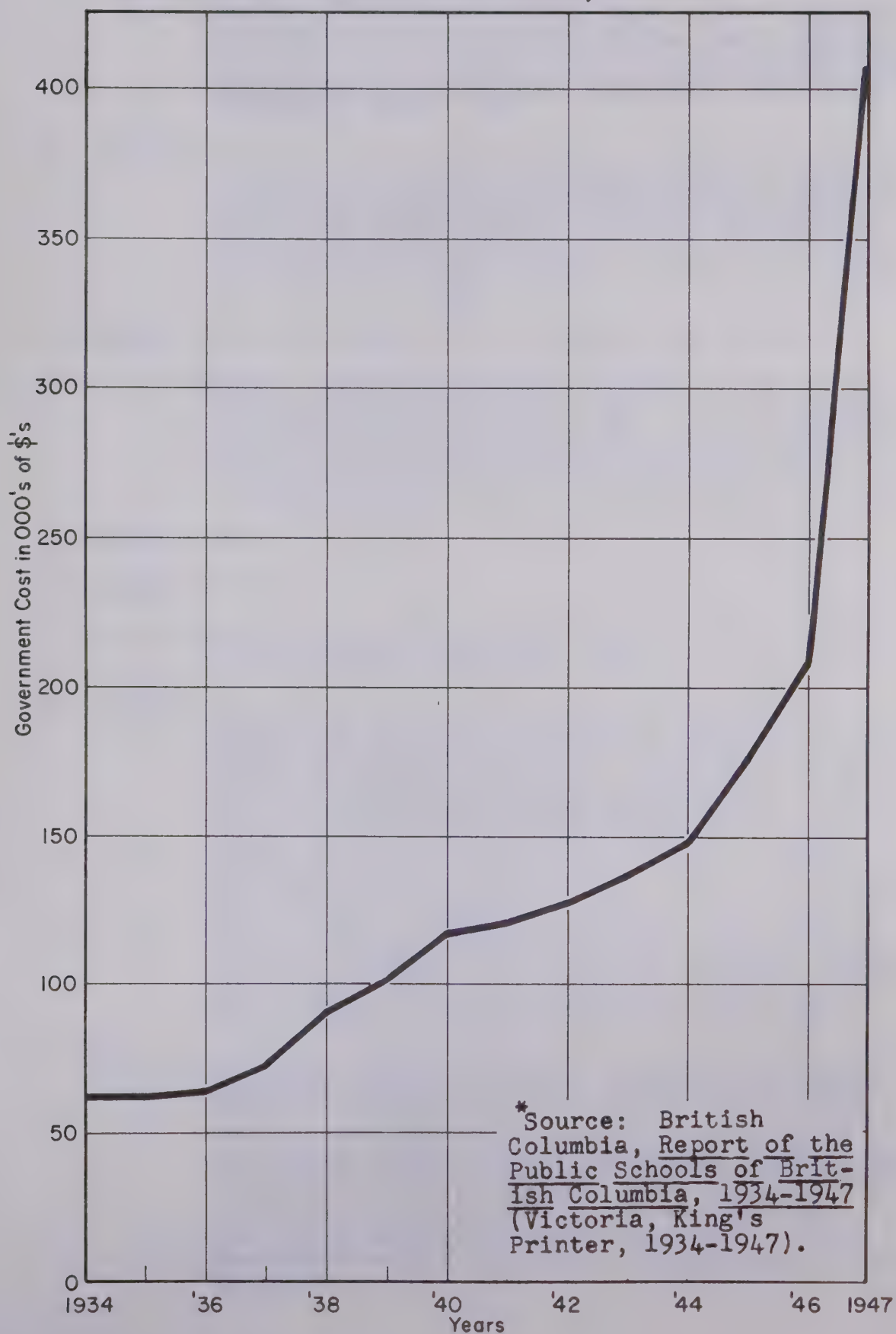
S. J. Willis saw<sup>91</sup> the increased number of unions in 1935, 1936, and 1937 as "a natural consequence" of the success of the Peace River experiment. Ratepayers, he said, were "seeking the formation of larger units of administration for school purposes." Government conveyance grants (See Fig. 14) reveal the increasing number of consolidations, and support Willis' statement. Nevertheless, Willis was overly optimistic. The decision in a three-year period of twenty-two districts to reorganize was encouraging to the Department of Education considering the small number of unions before 1935 but disheartening considering<sup>92</sup> the hundreds of small districts still in existence in 1937. Furthermore, aside from Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford and Creston, none of the new districts approached even remotely the scope of the Peace River Unit. Finally, it was already evident that districts preferred to form united districts with local control rather than educational administrative units under centralized control.







Fig.14  
GOVERNMENT CONVEYANCE COSTS, 1934-1947 \*









## NOTES

1. V. J. Parker, "Problems and Progress in Rationalizing the Use of the Resources of the Lower Fraser Valley", A. H. Siemens (ed.), Lower Fraser Valley: Evolution of a Cultural Landscape (Vancouver, Tantalus, 1966), 163.
2. The population of British Columbia in 1931 was 694,263. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, Volume I (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1936), 380. The population of the Lower Fraser Valley (Census Division 4) was 379,858. Ibid., 350.
3. Ibid. 279,989 people were classified as urban.
4. G. R. Winter, "Agricultural Development in the Lower Fraser Valley," Siemens, 114. Winter points out that 1941 was a peak year for acreage in use. Since that time there has been urban encroachment upon agricultural lands.
5. Ibid., 111.
6. Ibid., 109.
7. R. H. Meyer, "The Evolution of Roads in the Lower Fraser Valley," Siemens, 83.
8. British Columbia, Department of Municipal Affairs, Report of the Deputy Minister, 1935 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1936), W5 - W7. Cited hereafter as Report of Deputy Minister, with date. The municipalities in the Lower Fraser Valley were: cities—Chilliwack, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, and Vancouver; district municipalities—Burnaby, Chilliwack, Coquitlam, Delta, Fraser Mills, Kent, Langley, Maple Ridge, Matsqui, Mission, North Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, Sumas, Surrey, and West Vancouver; villages—Abbotsford, Gibsons Landing, Hope, and Mission.
9. British Columbia, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Regional Index of British Columbia (Victoria, Queen's Printer, 1966), 151-264. The cities incorporated in the twentieth century were: Chilliwack (1908), North Vancouver (1910), Port Coquitlam (1913), and Port Moody (1913). The district municipality incorporated in the twentieth century was West Vancouver (1912). The villages had all been incorporated in the Twenties.







10. Report of Deputy Minister, 1935, W5 - W7.
11. British Columbia, Department of Agriculture, Land for Farming (Victoria, Queen's Printer, 1962), 38, cited in Winter, 113.
12. Ibid.
13. J. D. S. Barrett, Progress and Happiness are Here (Abbotsford, Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, [1935]), 6-9.
14. Ibid., 3.
15. Ibid., 4-7, 11.
16. Statistics were obtained from Report of Deputy Minister, 1935, W5-W7.
17. The three districts were Burnaby, Coquitlam, and Maple Ridge. Chilliwack, Langley and Richmond had assessments per person of between \$900 and \$1000. Ibid.
18. Ibid., W15, W9.
19. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, March 27, 1935.
20. Ibid., April 17, 1935.
21. Ibid., March 6, 1935 and April 10, 1935. H. G. Johnston represented the municipal council and R. J. Grant the school board. T. F. Annandale was the government-appointed chairman.
22. Ibid., May 1, 1935. In a minority report Grant recommended a cut of \$1000.
23. The water had been pumped from approximately twenty thousand acres by 1924. A. H. Siemens, "The Process of Settlement in the Lower Fraser Valley in its Provincial Context," Siemens, 38; Report of Deputy Minister, 1935, W15.
24. Report of Deputy Minister, 1935, W9.
25. Day made the statement at a Sumas Board of Trade meeting. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, May 22, 1935.
26. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, June 5, 1935, 5.







27. Ibid., June 19, 1935.
28. Ibid., June 26, 1935.
29. Ibid., July 10, 1935.
30. Ibid., August 7, 1935.
31. Ibid., August 14, 1935.
32. Ibid., September 4, 1935. Sheffield had come from Nelson where he had been in charge of several Doukhobor "community schools" for seven years. He had also been the official trustee for eleven districts.
33. Reports of the Proceedings of the Thirty-First Convention of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, n.p., n.d., held at Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 1935, 27. Cited hereafter as Reports of Proceedings, with the place and dates of the convention.
34. The Sumas Mountain area was "that portion of Township 20 lying south of the Fraser River which is not within the limits of the Corporation of the District of Sumas, the Corporation of the District of Matsqui or the Corporation of the District of Chilliwack." (See Appendix G and Fig. 13.) It was often referred to as "Township 20."
35. There is no mention in newspapers of either promise. However, Plenderleith refers to them in his report. W. A. Plenderleith, "Report on the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford District," B. A. Fletcher, The Next Step in Canadian Education: An Account of the Larger Unit of School Administration (Toronto, Macmillan, 1939), 152. Both Plenderleith and Harold Campbell stated in interviews that the scheme of stabilizing taxes originated with King. Interview with Plenderleith, June 15, 1970; interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970. In 1939 Official Trustee A. S. Towell said that he did not know if a promise had been made concerning taxes. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, November 22, 1939. There is no record of a denial of the promise concerning the second vote.
36. Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 34.







37. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1937 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1937) 132. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.
38. Plenderleith, 146-9.
39. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui, October 7, 1936.
40. Sheffield's report to the B.C.S.T.A., Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 33. The saving was made largely through the use of relief labor. Plenderleith, 145.
41. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H25.
42. Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 33.
43. Ibid., 32-4.
44. Ibid., 35.
45. Ibid., 37. There had been four original boards. As well as boards for each of the three districts there had been a high school area board for Sumas and Abbotsford. Report of Public Schools, 1936, H139.
46. Reports of Proceedings, Penticton, September 21, 22, 23, 1936, 37.
47. Ibid., 38.
48. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, October 7, 1936.
49. Ibid., November 11, 1936.
50. Ibid., December 23, 1936.
51. This was an exaggeration if the sizeable negative note in the Peace River six months later was an indication of the opposition to the plan. (See Chapter V.)
52. Ibid., January 13, 1937.
53. Ibid., January 20, 1937. The emphasis is in the original.
54. Ibid., February 13, 1938.
55. Ibid., May 11, 1937.







56. Ibid., August 4, 1937.
57. "For a time Dr. Penderleith's stock with the cabinet was very low." Interview with Harold Campbell.
58. Report of the Deputy Minister, 1937, Q22.
59. In his report Plenderleith gave "the enrichment of the educational programme" as the reason for economy. Plenderleith, 153. However, in interviews, both he and Campbell stated that the taxation "freeze" was the decisive reason. Interviews with Plenderleith and Campbell.
60. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, July 21, 1937.
61. Plenderleith, 153. Teachers in superior schools were paid less than those in junior high or high schools.
62. Ibid., 153.
63. It is known that he spoke at Clayburn, Kilgard, and Huntingdon. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, June 9, 1937; June 16, 1937.
64. Table XVII shows that eleven teachers left the district in 1937. Of these, at least two resigned. Ibid., August 25, 1937.
65. Ibid., July 21, 1937.
66. Memorandum re Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Educational Administrative Area, July 27, 1937. Files and Proceedings of the B.C.T.F., number 3945, ABCTF.
67. Ibid., numbers 3944-3951.
68. Ibid., number 3945.
69. Ibid., number 3946.
70. Ibid., number 3947.
71. Ibid., number 3949.
72. Ibid., number 3951.
73. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, August 25, 1937.







74. Provincial averages were found in Report of Public Schools, 1935, S22; ibid., 1937, I25. Averages for Matsqui, Sumas, and Abbotsford were computed from lists of individual salaries found in ibid., 1935, S15, S17, S80-1, S84 and in ibid., 1937, I103, I158. In 1937 the average salary in Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford was \$956, and in the province, \$1386.
75. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, July 14, 1937. He said that only one district (Kent) in the province paid lower salaries. He was probably making a comparison only with other municipal districts.
76. Plenderleith, 145-155.
77. The three districts were Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe, and Saskatoon Creek. Report of Public Schools, 1932, L73, L76, L77.
78. P. F. Sharp, The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada (Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1948). Direct democracy was popular; the initiative, the recall, and the postcard referendum were all favored by farmers' political organizations. The desire to keep government close to home probably accounts in part for the farmers' distrust of centrally controlled parties.
79. In many ways, the people felt more closely allied with Alberta than with the rest of British Columbia. Even the teachers grew suspicious of the land beyond the Rockies. Oscar Palsson said: "Our only contact we had with Victoria was that we got our pay cheques from there, and we felt that they were sent grudgingly." Interview with Oscar Palsson, June 20, 1970.
80. Interview with Jean Gething, July 23, 1970.
81. Report of Public Schools, 1937, I32, I110, I192. The original schools were North Saanich High, North Saanich Elementary, and Deep Cove Elementary. Ibid., I110, I192.
82. Ibid., I32.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., I112.
85. Ibid., I32.







86. Ibid., 1938, J114. The school was called the Stillwater Superior School.
87. Ibid., 1937, I32. The three districts were Curzon, Kingsgate, and Yahk. Kingsgate did not have a school in operation at the time of the union.
88. Ibid The central school was the Yahk United Superior School. Ibid., 1938, J115.
89. British Columbia, Department of Education, British Columbia Educational Movements and Changes, 1936-1938 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1938), 6.
90. Report of Public Schools, 1938, J106, J180.
91. Ibid., 1937, 131.
92. In 1937 there were seven hundred and sixty-three districts, of which approximately five hundred and fifty were one-room school districts. Ibid., 1937, I14, I177.







## CHAPTER VII

### THE PERIOD BETWEEN COMMISSIONS, 1938 - 1944

By 1938 the government had firmly established the two large units and had passed legislation enabling the creation of others. Between this year and the appointment of a second commission on school finance in 1944, several events influenced their development. War broke out in 1939, a coalition government came to power in 1941, controversy continued concerning the administration of the two large units, and the government established several united districts. Although there is little evidence of interest in the large unit on the part of the legislature or the B.C.S.T.A., the B.C.T.F. maintained its concern.

#### 1. The Effect of World War II

World War II tended to discourage educational changes. There was a shortage of teachers, building materials, and construction workers. In 1941 Education Minister George Weir said<sup>1</sup> that the government intended to assume a greater proportion of the cost of education, "with a view to reducing the taxation burden upon land and of providing equality of educational opportunity in the less prosperous . . . parts of the Province." However, he added: "During the period of the war we may be obliged to mark time. It is not probable







that grants for education or even for health will be greatly increased before the end of the war."

The war ended the brief career of the Educational Administrative Areas Appointments Board provided for in the 1936 legislation. (See Chapter III.) Composed of the Superintendent of Education, the two normal school principals, and a group of inspectors, the Board appointed<sup>2</sup> all new teachers to the Peace River and M.S.A. Areas in 1938 and 1939. J. F. K. English, Director of the Peace River area, wrote<sup>3</sup> in 1942: "In normal times, all new . . . teachers are selected and appointed by the Administrative Areas Appointments Board. . . . During the present general shortage of qualified teachers much has been left to the discretion of the Department of Education at Victoria. Teachers are assigned to their schools by the Director. . . ."

## 2. The 1941 Election

After the provincial election of 1941, no party had a majority in the legislature. The Liberals won<sup>4</sup> twenty-one seats, the C.C.F., fourteen, and the Conservatives, twelve. The Liberals and Conservatives formed a coalition government, and the C.C.F. became the official opposition. John Hart replaced T. Dufferin Pattullo as premier. George Weir was defeated and returned to his university post.







### 3. The Peace River Educational Administrative Area

The mill rate in the Peace River Educational Administrative Area rose<sup>5</sup> from six in 1937 to 9.6 in 1942. By 1942 all schools had been either replaced or improved.<sup>6</sup> The standard of classroom equipment was improved. The administrative organization was clarified.<sup>7</sup> According to Director J. F. K. English, the local school committee of three elected members, although only an advisory body, in practice "very largely" controlled<sup>8</sup> the school buildings and grounds. Beginning in 1939, the director divided<sup>9</sup> the district into five regions, each of which elected a member of the area advisory committee, which met three times a year. A teachers' advisory committee of ten members elected by teachers of the district met<sup>10</sup> with the director at least twice a year.

English admitted<sup>11</sup> that there was a "tendency for local interest to diminish" when elected bodies lacked direct responsibility. Although "in many instances" they were doing "excellent work," in just as many cases ". . . they showed little concern" because they were "passive participants." English therefore recommended that the local committees be made responsible for "the school plant, wood, ice, etc." He insisted that the Director retain the responsibility for appointing, paying, and supervising teachers, and providing school supplies. "Surely," he argued, "a specialist in the field of education . . . is better equipped to give efficient service to a district . . . than a multiplicity of autonomous







bodies. . . ." He repeated<sup>12</sup> H. B. King's misleading implication that Great Britain's educational system was operated on a centralized basis. (See Chapter III.)

English listed<sup>13</sup> the advantages of centralized administration in the Peace River unit:

- (a) the approximate equalization of educational opportunity,
- (b) equalization of taxation,
- (c) a common basis for teachers' salaries,
- (d) continuous improvement in the professional direction of schools,
- (e) improvement in teaching methods,
- (f) assignments of teachers to schools by a professional administrator,
- (g) the provision of a "promotion area for teachers,"
- (h) lessened possibility of tyranny over teachers,
- (i) transfer of teachers without the disruption of services,
- (j) standardization of school supplies and equipment,
- (k) a uniform system of administrative procedures,
- (l) greater economy because of centralized purchasing,
- (m) more effective control of expenditures,
- (n) provision of a health unit and a library unit,
- (o) standardization of school buildings and the provision of "blanket insurance."

In 1941 Rolla's status became<sup>14</sup> the same as Dawson Creek's: a district under the official trustee but not officially a part of the large unit. Fort St. John continued







to function under an elected school board.

The gap between teachers' salaries in the Peace River and those in the province as a whole continued to widen. In 1943 the average salary in the Peace River was<sup>15</sup> \$922 compared with a provincial average of \$1562. The increase since 1937 in the Peace River was<sup>16</sup> 9 per cent compared with a provincial increase of 13 per cent. The average salary in the Peace River was now lower<sup>17</sup> than that of 85 per cent of the province's salaries.

The director continued to find difficulty providing secondary education. Between 1938 and 1943 superior schools were established at Swan Lake, Baldonnel, North Pine, Progress, Doe River, and Sunrise. These were two-room schools in most of which one teacher taught<sup>18</sup> the first five grades and the other teacher taught all the higher grades. It is estimated<sup>19</sup> that the retention rate between grades eight and nine in the small rural schools was at least 60 per cent in 1943, more than twice what it had been seven years earlier.

#### 4. The M.S.A. Educational Administrative Area

Like the school committees in the Peace River, the M.S.A. Advisory Committee wished an increase in its powers. In 1939 the Committee passed<sup>20</sup> a resolution requesting the Department of Education to establish a school board of seven members, three of whom would be elected, and four, including the Director, appointed. This board would control







financial matters including borrowing money and the preparation of estimates, and the acquisition and maintenance of lands, buildings and vehicles, but the director would continue to appoint and dismiss teachers. Although the 1936 legislation provided for annual elections of the advisory committee, no elections were held after 1937.

O. H. Heywood, a member of the committee from Matsqui, stated<sup>21</sup> in 1939 that he had been "given to understand" that there was "no provision within the Act for the election of new officers."

In 1939 the Sumas mill rate was raised<sup>22</sup> from ten to twelve and the Matsqui rate from twelve to eighteen on land, and from twelve to sixteen on improvements. The reason for the great increase in Matsqui was that school costs were determined by school population in each taxation area of the large unit (See Appendix G), and Matsqui's population had increased greatly. It was estimated<sup>23</sup> in 1939 that 65 per cent of the school children were in Matsqui, 27 per cent in Sumas, and 8 per cent in Group C (Abbotsford, Huntingdon, and "Township 20").

The Matsqui municipal council objected strenuously to the increase for several reasons. First, it maintained that the government had promised not to increase taxes for three years. (See Chapter VI.) Director A. S. Towell said<sup>24</sup> that he did not know if such a promise had been made but that taxes had been "pretty well held down" in 1936, 1937, and 1938. Now Matsqui had to pay "for four hundred







extra children." Towell pointed out that Matsqui would have had to pay for them even if it had remained a small district. Second, the council wanted<sup>25</sup> the M.S.A. Area to be a single taxation area. Reeve George Cruikshank said that Sumas and "Township 20" benefited greatly from being in the unit and should share equally in the added costs. Towell sympathized<sup>26</sup> with this objection and wanted the Act changed. "Counting pupils" in his opinion was no indication of ability to pay. Third, the council claimed<sup>27</sup> that taxpayers were unable "to stand any increase" and argued that the government should pay the entire cost of education. Fourth, it asked<sup>28</sup> for the right enjoyed by other municipal councils of refusing extraordinary school expenditures. This request was taken before the municipal committee of the provincial legislature and rejected<sup>29</sup> on Towell's advice.

The Matsqui council asked<sup>30</sup> the Minister of Education to submit a plebiscite on the M.S.A. Educational Administrative Area "to the electorate of the district at the forthcoming municipal election" in January. Cruikshank stated that the request was made not only because of financial reasons but also because of the government's promise in 1936 that such a plebiscite would be held after three years. Superintendent of Education S. J. Willis replied<sup>31</sup> that his Department had no power to hold "a formal plebiscite." However, ". . . the Reeves and Municipal Councils of the







respective municipalities [might] hold such a plebiscite at any time they deem [ed] it desirable."

In the face of the growing threat to the large unit, the advisory committee unanimously passed<sup>32</sup> a resolution expressing their "satisfaction and confidence in the present system of school management." Although "problems of assessment, taxation, and finance [had] yet to be worked out," the committee believed that children were now receiving a better education than under "the old separate system." "Any break in the system as a whole is bound to increase costs and will be less advantageous to the children. . . . The argument for centralized control is . . . that is (sic) provides better equipment, better salaries, more educational opportunities and courses, and improved facilities in every way with little if any increase in costs." Early in December the editor of the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News said<sup>33</sup> that it was "wrong to vote against a system one favors" because of the cost. There was "no dispute" about the benefits of the large unit, but it had "further demonstrated that the cost of education [was] beyond the present method to support it."

The next week the Matsqui municipal council announced<sup>34</sup> the wording of the plebiscite: "Are you in favor of the Educational Area under the present system of taxation?" The editor regretted<sup>35</sup> that the educational area was mentioned, but because he believed taxes to be too high, urged







his readers to vote "no" in order to "get action." The voters rejected<sup>36</sup> the plebiscite 685 to 150.

In January 1940 Willis instructed<sup>37</sup> Towell to call a conference between the advisory committee and the municipal councils to discuss the educational area and perhaps suggest amendments to the government. Delegates to the conference were announced<sup>38</sup> later in the month but there is no record that a conference was ever held.

In 1940 and 1941 mill rates in the two districts remained<sup>39</sup> approximately the same as in 1939: Matsqui's was seventeen and Sumas' twelve. Between 1939 and 1941 the population of Matsqui decreased and that of Sumas increased.<sup>40</sup> Although Reeve James Simpson of Matsqui announced<sup>41</sup> in 1941 that Matsqui's financial position was "the best in fifteen years," the Matsqui council continued to favor a single taxation unit. Simpson said, "If there was equalization of taxation over the area I don't believe there would be any objection to consolidation." In 1942 the Matsqui mill rate was raised<sup>42</sup> to eighteen and the following year the Sumas mill rate was raised to fifteen. Since the formation of the large unit Matsqui's rate had increased 50 per cent and Sumas' had more than doubled.

Teachers' salaries in the M.S.A. Area lagged<sup>43</sup> far behind provincial salaries in 1938 and 1939. In the latter year the Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News announced<sup>44</sup> that many teachers were "going to more lucrative fields" where they could earn from 25 to 50 per cent more money. Salaries







were raised<sup>45</sup> by 9 per cent in 1939. Again in 1941 the News stated<sup>46</sup> that many teachers were leaving the district to obtain higher salaries. The following year after failing to reach an agreement with Towell for higher salaries, the teachers initiated<sup>47</sup> arbitration proceedings. Towell argued<sup>48</sup> that the M.S.A. Area was paying "the full standard rate for districts of its type." The "pockets of hard-pressed taxpayers" were the "only source of additional funds." Towell continued: "As long as 100 per cent of all salary increases has to be paid by the local taxpayer it stands to reason that the poorer districts cannot match the salaries paid by the wealthier districts." The arbitration board awarded<sup>49</sup> the teachers a total increase of \$7000. By 1943 the average salary in the M.S.A. Area was<sup>50</sup> \$1206, an increase since 1937 of 26 per cent, more than twice the provincial rate of increase in the same period.

After 1936 the government ceased to make special grants to the M.S.A. Area. Instead, according to Towell, it paid<sup>51</sup> 40 per cent of the cost of new buildings instead of the customary 20 per cent.

In 1937, as an economy measure, Mt. Lehman High School had been classified as a superior school. (See Chapter VI.) In 1939 Matsqui High School was similarly reclassified<sup>52</sup> and the following year a superior school was opened at Upper Sumas. Only one other district in the province classified<sup>53</sup> schools which were in effect junior







high or elementary-junior high schools as superior schools.

The health unit continued to function. In 1940 Medical Health Officer J. A. Taylor announced:<sup>54</sup> "For what is believed to be the first time in the continent of North America, the pupils of a school have received through the school health services a complete physical examination. . . ." Two years later, however, Taylor was transferred to the Peace River and the operations of the unit were reduced<sup>55</sup> because of a war-time shortage of doctors.

#### 5. United School Districts

By 1943 there were twenty-nine united rural school districts in British Columbia comprising<sup>56</sup> one hundred and sixty-four original school districts. Six such districts were formed<sup>57</sup> in the school year 1942-1943. According to S. J. Willis, the ". . . admitted advantages of larger units of administration and the lack of an adequate supply of teachers combined" to encourage the establishment of united districts. Under William Plenderleith's guidance, nineteen districts combined<sup>58</sup> to form the Nanaimo-Ladysmith United Rural School District. Although Brechin, one of the largest of the nineteen, voted against union, it was nevertheless included.<sup>59</sup> In 1943 there were<sup>60</sup> six hundred and ninety-eight children and twenty-four teachers in the district. Many secondary school students were transported<sup>61</sup> to high schools in Nanaimo and Ladysmith, which were not parts of







the large unit. Although not called an educational administrative area, the district was administered<sup>62</sup> by an official trustee, assisted by elected advisory committees.

#### 6. Recommendations of the B.C.T.F.

In October 1937 the B.C.T.F. Executive appointed<sup>63</sup> a committee to study the large administrative unit. The chairman, John Burnett, informed<sup>64</sup> the other members in March 1938 that rural educational problems in the United States were similar to those in British Columbia. He reported<sup>65</sup> that the Canadian Education Association favored units containing from fifty to seventy-five schools under the control of elected school boards and locally-appointed superintendents. Burnett concluded<sup>66</sup> that "not much more progress" was possible in rural areas without large administrative units. He explained<sup>67</sup> some aspects of the 1936 legislation on "educational administrative areas" (See Chapter III), referring in particular to the appointments board and the composition of the advisory committee.

Frank Levirs, principal of Kimberly Junior High School and corresponding member of the committee, opposed<sup>68</sup> compelling districts to enter large units "except as a last resort." Referring to the success of the Creston United School District, he said that teachers should rely upon "prominent local men" to effect the change. Levirs strongly favored control by elected boards with directors acting as advisors. He concluded: ". . . I am distinctly and directly







opposed to any system whereby a single man, human in his virtues and vices, however efficient he may be, is put in charge of all legislative, executive, and judicial duties in a school district subject only to the remote control of the Department of Education."

The committee requested<sup>69</sup> local teachers' associations to give opinions on the composition of school boards, the manner of appointment of the Director, and the division of powers between the board and the director. Twelve associations replied.<sup>70</sup> Most of them endorsed the principle of the large administrative unit and favored control by school boards provided that all professional matters were controlled by the director. The majority of associations wanted the board to be partly elected and partly appointed and the director to be chosen by the board with the approval of the Department of Education. The Ladysmith-Chemainus association said<sup>71</sup> that ". . . teachers through their organization must control professional matters." Mission wanted boards appointed by municipal councils and the Department of Education. New Westminster favored "strong" school boards.

In March 1940 the committee issued<sup>72</sup> its final report. It agreed with the majority of the associations, except that it wanted<sup>73</sup> boards to be entirely elected, at large "where compactness and homogeneity permit," and by zones in other cases. Henry Charlesworth, general secretary







and committee member, and possibly Burnett also, dissented<sup>74</sup> from "several recommendations of the report." The annual general meeting of the B.C.T.F. supported<sup>75</sup> "the formation of larger geographical units in school administration when and where conditions warrant [ed] ." The resolution continued: "The change should be brought about only with the consent of the electorate in those areas affected. Factors such as geographical proximity . . . and community of interests . . . should be considered. . . ." The general meeting favored control by an elected school board.

Another committee was appointed<sup>76</sup> in October 1942. In its first report the committee stressed<sup>77</sup> that the large unit should not be introduced as a means of saving money. "No credit," it said, "is due to any [area] which gives dental, medical, and other services to the children, and pays for it in part by reducing teachers' salaries." The lowest salary in the Peace River in 1929, the report continued, was \$1320, and the average salary in 1941 was \$875. The charge that the large unit was responsible for the reductions, although untrue,<sup>78</sup> was an indication of the B.C.T.F.'s strong concern over low salaries in the Peace River District. A further note of caution was sounded in the committee's recommendation that ". . . everyone should be educated to the value" of the large unit before its







introduction. In its final report late in 1943 the committee stated<sup>79</sup> that it was not possible for one man to operate effectively as official trustee, director, and inspector, and recommended that school boards elected at large by universal franchise, control policy in large units, but that the directors control teacher appointments.







1. G. M. Weir, "Retrospect and Prospect in Education,"  
The B.C. Teacher, volume XX, number 10, June 1941,  
459-460.
2. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, July 27, 1938.
3. J. F. K. English, "The Peace River Educational  
Administrative Unit" (mimeographed, Pouce Coupe,  
1942), 18.
4. British Columbia, Statement of Votes by Electoral  
Districts: General Election including Armed  
Service Voting: October 21, 1941 (Victoria,  
King's Printer, 1941), 12.
5. English, 11. "New schools were erected at the rate of  
three or four per annum. Buildings not  
replaced were put in good condition—new floors,  
ceilings, stoves, stove-guards, painting and  
kalsomining, roomy entrance porches . . . were  
examples of the improvements made."
6. Ibid., 26.
7. Ibid., 15-16; Peace River Block News, October 12, 1939  
and January 25, 1940.
8. English, 15-16.
9. Ibid., 16; Peace River Block News, January 25, 1940.  
James H. Clark, "The Old Trustee" who had  
defended the large unit in 1935 (See Chapter V),  
was the secretary of the committee.
10. English, 16.
11. Ibid., 31.
12. Ibid. "In such countries as Great Britain, Australia  
and New Zealand educational administration in  
theory and practice has long been conducted  
along the lines recommended for the Larger  
Administrative Units in certain Canadian  
provinces."
13. Ibid., 29.
14. Ibid., 26.
15. The provincial average was obtained from British Columbia,  
Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia,  
1943 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1943), B22. Cited  
hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date.  
The Peace River average was computed from indivi-







dual salaries in ibid., B148, B226-7.

16. The average provincial salary in 1937 was \$1386, and the average Peace River salary, \$848. See Chapter V.
17. A table in ibid., B23 shows that 3416 out of the province's 4029 teachers earned more than \$920 in the school year 1942-1943.

18. The following table shows the number of pupils in each of the higher grades in the two-room superior schools in 1943:

Grade	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Baldonnel	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Doe River	3	6	-	6	5	3	-
North Pine	3	5	-	6	2	-	-
Progress				2	1	6	3
Sunrise	7	10	3	8	-	-	2
Swan Lake			1	3	4	2	1
<u>Ibid.</u> , B148.							

19. In 1942 in the one-room and two-room schools of the Peace River District there were eighty-three children in grade eight. In the same year, there were twenty-eight children in grade eight in the larger schools (Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe, Rolla). Ibid., 1942, B139, B140-1, B156, B219-220. The following year there were twenty-seven grade nine children in the two-room superior schools, four in the one-room schools, and forty-six in the larger schools. Ibid., 1943, B146, B148-9, B163. Assuming complete retention in the larger schools between grade eight and nine, we may assume that  $46 - 28$  of the grade nine children in the larger schools had come from the one- and two-room schools. Thus the minimum retention would be  $(27 + 4 + 18) \div 83$  or approximately 60 per cent. To obtain a maximum retention rate let us assume that the retention rate in the larger schools was only 60 per cent. Then  $46 - 17$  of the grade nine pupils in the larger schools came from one- and two-room schools. Thus the maximum retention rate would be  $(27 + 4 + 29) \div 83$  or approximately 72 per cent.
20. H. McArthur, Director of Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Educational Administrative Committee, to Harry Charlesworth. Files and Proceedings of B.C.T.F., number 5114, ABCTF; Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, February 1, 1939. The former reference is cited hereafter as "Files and Proceedings."







21. Ibid., October 25, 1939.
22. Department of Municipal Affairs, Report of the Deputy Minister, 1939, (Victoria, King's Printer, 1940), R25. R27. Cited hereafter as Report of Deputy Minister, with date.
23. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, November 8, 1939.  
It is impossible to verify this information from enrolment figures as children did not necessarily attend school in their respective taxation areas.
24. Ibid., November 22, 1939.
25. Ibid., December 6, 1939.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., November 8, 1939 and December 6, 1939.
28. Ibid., November 8, 1939 and November 29, 1939.
29. Ibid., October 11, 1939.
30. Ibid., November 29, 1939.
31. Ibid., November 29, 1939.
32. Ibid., December 6, 1939.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., December 13, 1939.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., December 20, 1939.
37. Ibid., January 10, 1940.
38. Ibid., January 31, 1940. The delegates from the advisory committee were: Alex Beaton (Matsqui), Harry Day (Sumas), and George Pratt (Abbotsford). The municipal council delegates were: George Cruikshank (Matsqui) and W. M. Shore (Abbotsford). The representative of the Sumas council had apparently not yet been chosen.
39. Report of Deputy Minister, 1940, M25, M27; 1941, U27, U29. The Sumas mill rate was unchanged from that of 1939; the Matsqui rate in 1939 had been eighteen for land and sixteen for improvements. Vide supra.







40. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, December 3, 1941.
41. Ibid., March 12, 1941.
42. Report of Deputy Minister, 1942, K27, K29; ibid., 1943, M27. In 1943 Matsqui had the highest mill rate of any district municipality. Only three district municipalities had higher mill rates than Sumas. M. A. Cameron, Report of Commission on Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945), 24.
43. The average salaries in the M.S.A. Unit in 1938 and 1939 were \$982 and \$984 respectively. These figures were computed from individual salaries shown in Report of Public Schools, 1938. J101, J110, J158-9; ibid., 1939, H104-5, H115, H166-7. The provincial averages for the two years were \$1430 and \$1439 respectively. Ibid., 1938, J22; ibid., 1939, H26.
44. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, August 9, 1939.
45. In 1940 the average salary in the M.S.A. Area was \$1068. This average was computed from individual salaries shown in Report of Public Schools, 1940, B113, B124, B175-7. In this year the average provincial salary was \$1477. Ibid., B23.
46. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, August 6, 1940 and August 20, 1941.
47. Ibid., June 24, 1942.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., July 29, 1942.
50. The M.S.A. average was computed from individual salaries shown in Report of Public Schools, 1943, B134, B145, B196-7. The provincial average in 1943 was \$1562. Ibid., B22.
51. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, November 22, 1939.
52. Report of Public Schools, 1940, B124; ibid., 1941, D135.
53. Ibid., 1943, D135-D140. Significantly, the other district was Nanaimo-Ladysmith (Vide infra) in the inspectorate of William Plenderleith, who had begun the practice of reclassification in the M.S.A. Area. Harewood Superior School in Nanaimo-Ladysmith District had sixty-five pupils







in grades seven to nine in 1943. Corresponding enrolments at Matsqui, Mount Lehman, and Upper Sumas Superior Schools were eighty-six, one hundred and twenty, and one hundred and seventeen respectively.

54. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, December 4, 1940.
55. Ibid., May 6, 1942.
56. Report of Public Schools, 1943, B30. Some of these districts not previously mentioned in this study were: Athelmere, Invermere, Bevan - Puntledge, Castlegar, Grasmere - Roosville, Howe Sound, Okanagan, Sechelt, South Okanagan, and Wells - Barkerville. Ibid., B215 ff.
57. Ibid., B30.
58. Ibid. Later, the number of districts was given as twenty-one. British Columbia Department of Education (The Provincial Advisory Committee to the C.E.A.-Kellogg Project in Educational Leadership), "School Organization in British Columbia" (mimeographed, Victoria, 1952), 21. Cited hereafter as "School Organization."
59. Interview with William Plenderleith, June 15, 1970. Brechin's inclusion perhaps indicates that the government was moving away from the voluntary principle.
60. Report of Public Schools, 1943, B147-8, B224.
61. "School Organization," 21.
62. Ibid.
63. The Executive of the B.C.T.F. appointed the committee on October 2, 1937. "Files and Proceedings," number 4858, ABCTF.
64. Ibid., numbers 4350-4361.
65. Ibid., numbers 4362-5.
66. Ibid., number 4351.
67. Ibid., number 4365.
68. Frank Levirs to J. N. Burnett, November 16, 1937, ibid., numbers 5117-8.







69. Ibid., number 4354.
70. Ibid., number 5205.
71. Ibid., number 5014.
72. Ibid., number 5205.
73. Ibid., number 5301.
74. Charlesworth's name was crossed off both copies of the report in the B.C.T.F. files. Beside his name on one copy was written, "Not in agreement with several sections of this report," followed by Charlesworth's initials; Burnett's name was crossed off one copy with no comment or initials. In a telephone conversation with the writer in June 1970, Burnett said that he had no recollection of the committee. Sections of the report on which the committee was not unanimous were the methods of choosing directors and school board members. It is therefore probable that Charlesworth and possible that Burnett favored the appointment by the Department of Education of directors and some school board members.
75. Ibid., number 5301.
76. The committee was appointed on October 21, 1942.  
Ibid., number 8299.
77. Report of Larger Administrative Areas Committee, April 1943. Ibid. ., number 8562.
78. Salaries had been reduced before the formation of the large unit. See Chapter V.
79. "Report of the Committee on Larger Administrative Areas," The B.C. Teacher, volume XXIII, number 3, November 1943, 49-51.







## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CAMERON YEARS, 1944 - 1946

In 1944 the government appointed Maxwell A. Cameron sole commissioner to enquire into educational finance in British Columbia. The government received his report favorably next year and implemented it in 1946.

#### 1. The Appointment of a Commission on Educational Finance

Many of the educational problems criticized by H. B. King in 1934 and 1935 remained unsolved ten years later. The provincial government's share of school costs was approximately the same. (See Table XVIII and Fig. 15.) The median mill rates for schools in cities, district municipalities, and rural districts were<sup>1</sup> 17.5, 12.5, and 11.3 respectively in 1944, compared with 15.0, 9.5, and 5.7 in 1934. Although there were fewer school districts, the proportion of rural districts under official trustees rose<sup>2</sup> from 21 per cent in 1934 to at least 38 per cent in 1944. (See Fig. 16.)

The Coalition government announced<sup>3</sup> at the 1944 session of the legislature that it would investigate school finance. Pending completion of the investigation, the legislature voted an extra \$370,000 in school grants. In November 1944 an order in council appointed<sup>4</sup> Maxwell A. Cameron, professor of education at the University of British







TABLE XVIII  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COSTS  
1934 - 1947<sup>★</sup>

	Total School Cost	District's Share	Government Grant	Government Grant as Per Cent
1934	\$7,958,069	\$5,601,431	\$2,356,938	29.6
1935	8,150,699	5,623,115	2,527,584	31.0
1936	8,427,074	5,802,969	2,624,105	31.1
1937	9,178,597	6,315,902	2,862,695	31.2
1938	9,708,774	6,668,404	3,040,370	28.4
1939	10,159,608	7,010,070	3,149,538	31.0
1940	10,022,694	6,935,916	3,086,778	30.8
1941	10,476,772	7,018,516	3,458,266	33.0
1942	10,607,627	7,092,404	3,515,223	33.1
1943	11,011,160	7,578,048	3,433,112	31.2
1944	11,669,713	7,986,131	3,683,582	31.6
1945	13,170,454	8,661,004	4,509,450	34.2
1946	14,179,891	9,053,420	5,126,471	36.2
1947	19,272,431	10,778,457	8,493,974	44.1

<sup>★</sup> Sources: M. A. Cameron, Report of the Commission on School Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945); British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1945-1947 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945-1947).

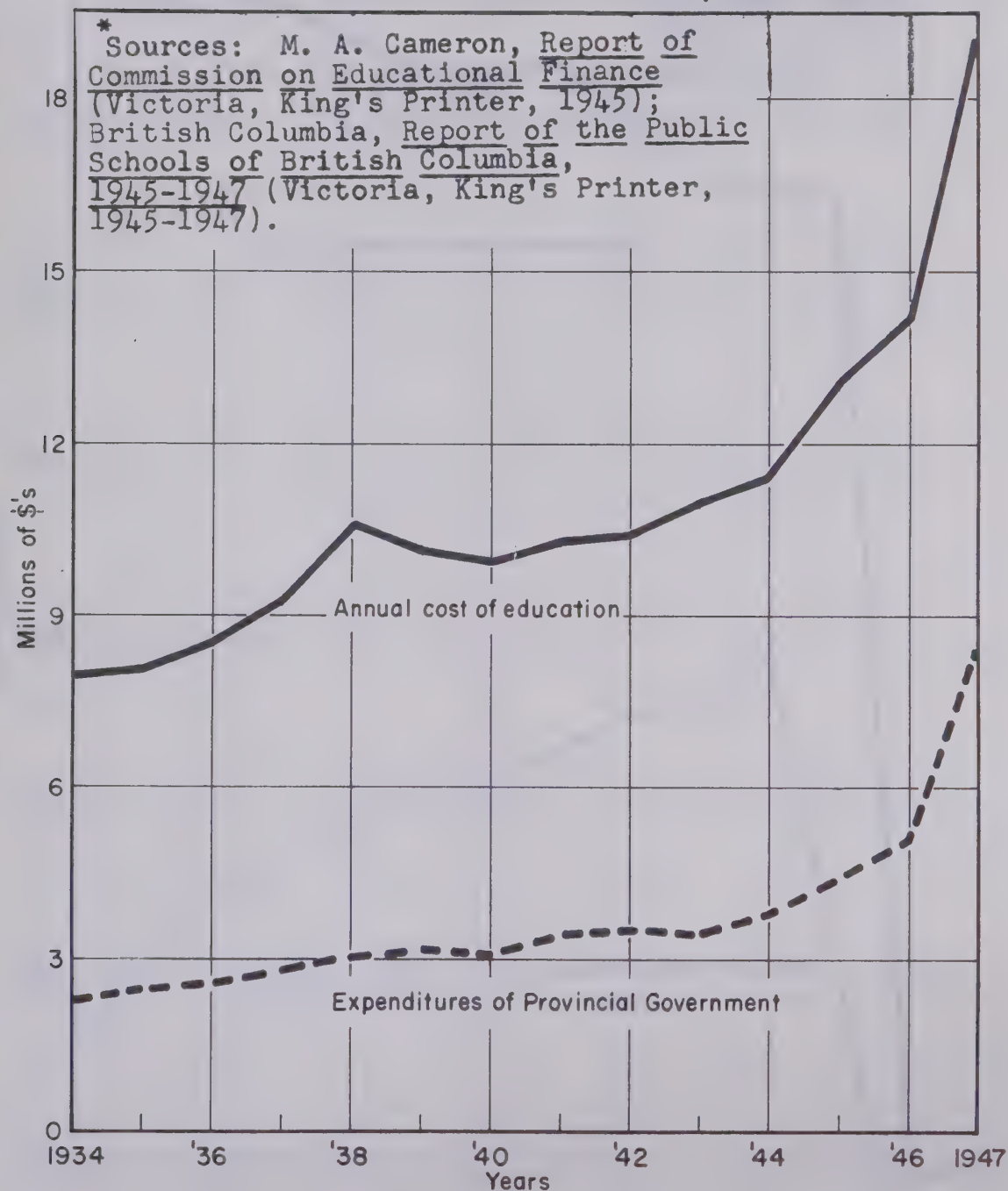






Fig. 15

## DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COSTS, 1934-1947 \*

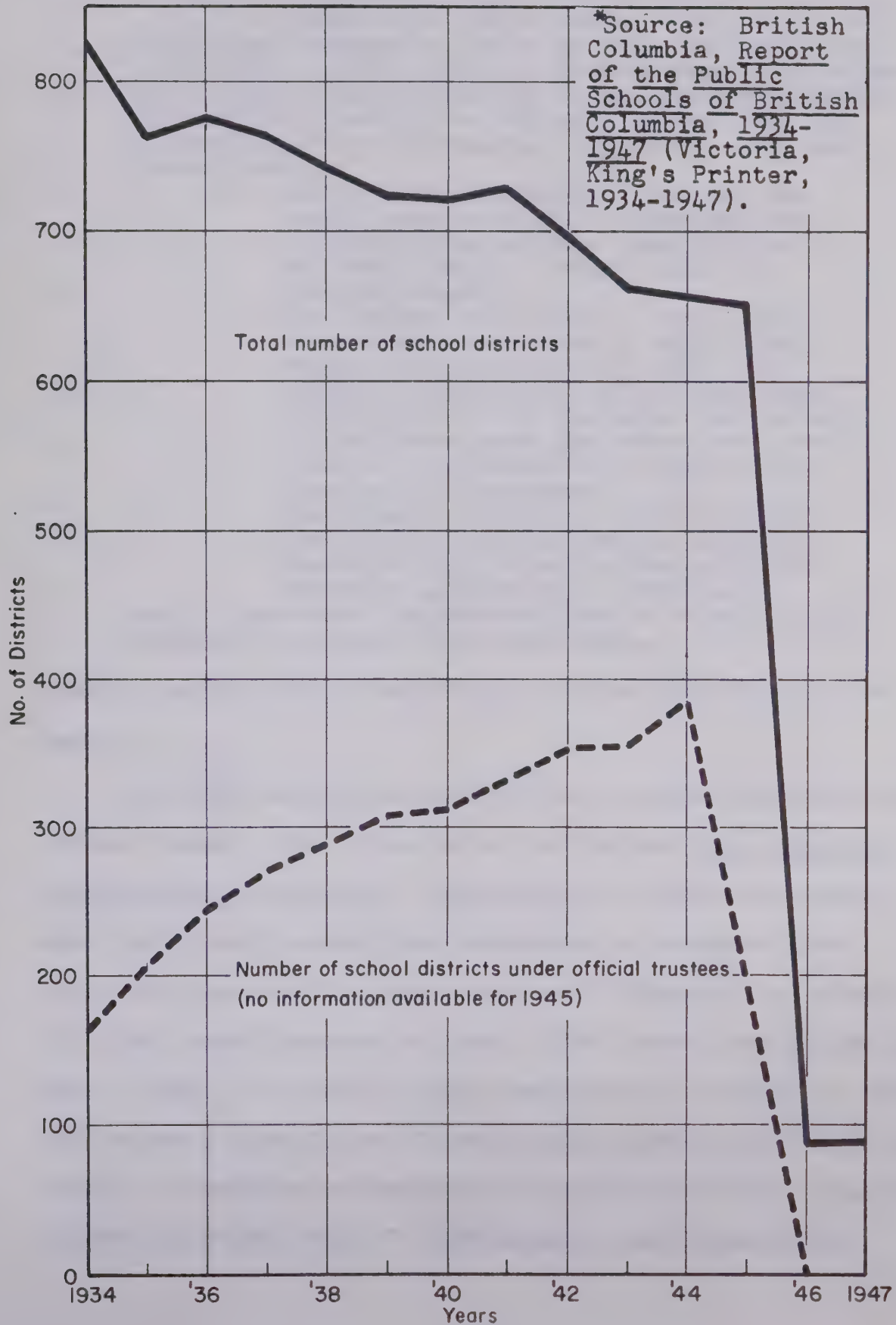








TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS & NUMBER OF SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS UNDER OFFICIAL TRUSTEES, 1934-1947 \*









Columbia, sole commissioner

. . . to inquire into the existing distribution of powers and responsibilities between the Provincial Government and the school districts and to appraise the present fiscal position of the school districts in British Columbia, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing, to inquire into and report upon:—

- a. The present responsibilities of the school districts; the character and extent of the services now provided by them; and the present cost of such services:
- b. The present resources of the school districts; the extent to which these revenue sources are utilized; the character and extent of the municipal indebtedness; the character and extent of the Government assistance now provided to the school districts by the Provincial Government:
- c. The present method of administering the Public Schools System; the incidence of cost of education under the existing allocation of revenue;—

and to make such recommendations in regard to the premises as he may think advisable.

Cameron said<sup>5</sup> that he had "been promised a perfectly free hand."

In 1936 Cameron had given<sup>6</sup> his views on centralization, school finance, and large units in his book The Financing of Education in Ontario. He tended to dismiss the argument that local control was necessary to preserve local interest; South Africa had preserved<sup>7</sup> "flexibility, diversity [and] sensitiveness to local life" under centralized control. "Now, of course, little reflection is needed to reveal the enormous advantages of centralized administration of education. Something approaching an equal opportunity would be offered to every child." Furthermore, the division of







support would be simple, "petty local considerations" in appointments would be eliminated, many useless schools would be closed, and more efficient methods of financing could be used. Much of the defence of local control, Cameron concluded,<sup>8</sup> was a "mere rationalization of an already existing situation." On the other hand, provinces were not "ready" to assume complete control. "Insufficient flexibility" was the result of "improper use of the power which central authorities [had] already been exercising." Before they extended their power, they should "learn to use" the power they already possessed. Moreover, as centralized control involved putting "all the eggs in one basket," failure would be "disastrous."<sup>9</sup> Ontario had a long tradition of local management, and although the public attitude was not "unchangeable," the people were not yet prepared for a change.

Although the government should increase its grants substantially, as local control must continue, it should not pay the entire cost of education. ". . . Extravagance would almost certainly result." Even without dishonesty or conscious purpose, a local board would find it easy to convince itself of the necessity of a given expenditure if the province "were to foot the bill."

Cameron strongly favored<sup>10</sup> large administrative units. They were "urgently required" in rural areas. "The small school sections" stood "in the way of all reform." The







"optimum" population of a district was<sup>11</sup> between twelve hundred and six thousand, larger than most townships but smaller than most counties. It was "futile" to rely upon "permissive legislation and voluntary support" to introduce "this sorely needed reform."<sup>12</sup> To "lessen opposition," larger government grants should coincide with the establishment of larger units.

In summary, Cameron in 1936 had favored a continuation of local control in Ontario, increased government grants, and administrative units larger than most of those in existence but considerably smaller than those recommended by H. B. King in 1935.

A month before his appointment as commissioner, Cameron had told<sup>13</sup> a joint meeting of the Canadian and Newfoundland Educational Association and the National Educational Association that the payment of 50 per cent of school costs by provincial governments was "a useful mark to shoot at."

## 2. The Cameron Report

Cameron held<sup>14</sup> twenty-five public hearings and received seventy-five briefs. Forty-one briefs came<sup>15</sup> from municipalities and school boards. The Dawson Creek Chamber of Commerce and two local associations of the Alberta Farmers' Union presented<sup>16</sup> briefs at the Dawson Creek hearing, all of which recommended that less revenue be obtained from







land taxes. However, the Chamber of Commerce said<sup>17</sup> that "local responsibility" should not be "entirely" removed. The Chamber considered that large administrative units produced efficiency, economy, and equality of educational opportunity. At Dawson Creek, Cameron implied<sup>18</sup> that the Peace River might soon have an elected school board. At the Abbotsford hearing, the Matsqui and Sumas Municipal Councils recommended<sup>19</sup> that land taxes be reduced. The M.S.A. Advisory Board recommended<sup>20</sup> that the provincial government pay the entire cost of education and that if land taxes were continued they should be uniform throughout the province and "drastically reduced." Concerning the control of education, the Committee said:<sup>21</sup>

The Provincial Government should take over the entire administration and operation of all public schools, with the public interest in each district represented by an elected advisory committee.

The [Advisory] Board feels that the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Area, which was established some ten years ago as an experiment in education, has completely demonstrated its value and its merit. It has resulted in a rate of educational progress and the attainment of a standard of schooling that would have been utterly impossible under the former system of Boards of School Trustees, under constant pressure from Municipal Councils whose primary interest was to hold school expenditures at or near the minimum level.

It is therefore recommended that similar educational areas should be established wherever suitable conditions exist; and that in any event large units of administration should replace the present multiplicity of small rural school boards as rapidly as possible.

Cameron said<sup>22</sup> that centralization in British Columbia was increasing; official trustees were being appointed to







an "increasing extent," and two large areas under directors had been established. Complete centralization would bring equality and efficiency, but also "rigidity," "mechanical, static routine," and "some loss of local interest."<sup>23</sup> The "strenuous efforts to enlist local interest by means of local boards" had failed; many citizens had refused to serve on these boards. "It would be a great tragedy if our school system were to lose the services and support of our school trustees, who for the most part have done excellent work, often in spite of very irritating obstacles." Experimentation was more likely in a partially decentralized system. Junior high schools, school lunch programs, and vocational agriculture courses had been introduced by a combination of "central authority and local initiative." Cameron conceded that centralized control would be as democratic as local control in the sense that schools would still be responsible to the people's representatives. "Indeed if centralization [brought] about a much greater degree of equality than decentralization [could]," it would be more democratic. "However, because local control results in greater public interest, because it enlists the voluntary services of an army of citizens, and because the local people can feel that, in part, they possess the schools . . . it may be proper to call decentralization more democratic."

"Informal discussions" at public hearings had shown







that the majority wished to retain local control. This should be done if a "substantial" degree of equalization of opportunity and tax burden were possible under local control. Like King, Cameron cited<sup>24</sup> the increasing number of official trusteeships as evidence that ". . . the system of administering rural schools . . . [was] slowly but steadily breaking down."

Little imagination is needed to prophesy that unless something fundamental is done, the great majority of our rural Boards will have to be replaced within a measurable period of time by Official Trustees appointed by the Council of Public Instruction. We shall have centralization without its attendant advantages of equalization and efficiency, and without ever having consciously sought it. The step from decentralization to centralization is too fundamental to take unintentionally.<sup>25</sup>

As for the two educational administrative areas, because all large units had been successful "regardless of the method of control," Cameron believed<sup>26</sup> that ". . . their conspicuous success . . . [was] due more to their largeness than to the fact that they were not managed by School Boards."

Current expenditures in rural districts in 1944 ranged<sup>27</sup> from less than \$900 to more than \$2400. Assessments per classroom ranged from less than \$10,000 to over \$200,000, and mill rates ranged from zero to over twenty.<sup>28</sup> Cameron concluded<sup>29</sup> that expenditures, ability, and effort of rural districts were "characterized by extreme inequality." There was also inequality of opportunity in rural districts;







for every hundred city children in grades one to three, there were fifty-six in grades ten to twelve, but for every hundred rural children in grades one to three, there were only sixteen in grades ten to twelve, many of whom attended superior schools or one- or two-room high schools. Some rural children attended secondary schools in municipalities, but, on the other hand, some of the large "rural" schools were "in communities which [were] really urban." Many municipal school districts were too small; eleven of them had fewer than a thousand people. Taxes would be equalized within each large unit and much property not then in any school district would be included. Other advantages would be:<sup>30</sup> improvements in the quality of school boards, economy and efficiency of business procedures, better recruitment and retention of teachers, and elimination of sectarianism and local jealousies. England, Scotland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and many American states had proven the superiority of the large unit. ". . . British Columbia, which once led the Provinces . . . [was] now lagging toward the rear," even though public opinion was "strongly in favor."<sup>31</sup>

Cameron thought<sup>32</sup> that, ". . . if possible, a district should be large enough to justify a reasonably adequate schooling from Grades I to XII," and should be "understandable and comprehensible" to the local people. Wherever possible, it should be a community, an economic entity, or







a trading area. He submitted<sup>33</sup> a comprehensive plan for reorganization, which left eight municipal school districts virtually unchanged. Of the five recently established districts which Cameron considered large units, only South Okanagan remained unchanged.<sup>34</sup> The Central Okanagan District, established in 1945, was incorporated with Kelowna. The northern and southern parts of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith District were "separated and joined with the cities of Nanaimo and Ladysmith respectively."<sup>35</sup> Cameron suggested that the Mission area, on the northern side of the Fraser River, should be combined with the M.S.A. Area, although ". . . one could not be very critical of a scheme which left the M.S.A. Area untouched." The Peace River District, on the other hand, should be divided into two parts as the northern area had "different needs and problems" than the southern area and infrequent communications with it. "However, . . . we cannot quarrel too much with the present arrangement, provided Rolla, Fort St. John, and Dawson Creek are included, and provided the local people are allowed to control their schools if they wish."<sup>36</sup>

In all, Cameron recommended<sup>37</sup> that there be seventy-four districts and sixteen "unattached schools." Forty of the districts, having fewer than thirty teachers, did not qualify as "large administrative educational units" under the arbitrary terms of this study. (See Table XIX.) One of the proposed districts, Portland Canal, had only three







TABLE   XIX  
THE SIZE OF THE SEVENTY-FOUR DISTRICTS  
RECOMMENDED BY THE CAMERON REPORT  
1945<sup>★</sup>

Number of Teachers	Number of Districts
100 or more	6
90 - 99	3
80 - 89	1
70 - 79	0
60 - 69	3
50 - 59	6
40 - 49	11
30 - 39	4
20 - 29	13
10 - 19	21
Less than 10	6

<sup>★</sup>Source: Cameron, Maxwell A., Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945), 89-90.







teachers. Cameron said<sup>39</sup> that seven of his proposed districts could offer only a fairly adequate secondary program, twenty-five, including Peace River South, could offer only "a very limited program," and eight, including Peace River North, had no established high schools. He conceded<sup>40</sup> that "many" would feel that his ". . . plan did not go far enough."

Cameron stated:<sup>41</sup>

. . . The size and powers of the local district cannot be left to local decision. It is the duty of the Provincial Government to put into operation the school districts which will best serve the Province's children. . . . This does not mean that the Government should put the plan into operation without consultation with local bodies. . . . The principle of large districts should not be a matter of debate; the details should.

Cameron criticized<sup>42</sup> the annual school meeting in rural areas.

. . . It is falling into decay, partly because the district is so small that really important problems cannot be effectively attacked and partly because it is not in tune with present-day conditions. Large districts should revive public interest in school affairs, but he would be a hardy optimist indeed who expected the annual school meeting to function well in them.

Nevertheless, to avoid "finding a substitute" for the annual school meeting, Cameron recommended that it be continued in rural areas for the purpose of electing "delegates." These delegates would then meet to elect school trustees and to exercise all the powers previously held by school meetings. By continuing the annual meetings while stripping







them of their powers, this proposal, albeit unwittingly, almost ensured even poorer attendance at such meetings and a consequent weakening of the base of representation in rural areas. Cameron recommended<sup>43</sup> that the inspector of schools have the right to attend all board meetings within his area, to speak and make recommendations, but not to vote. "As a matter of ordinary good sense, the Boards . . . will avail themselves of [his] experience, training, and knowledge. . . ." <sup>44</sup>

Cameron thought that finances were the "main barrier" to reorganization. A district with a low mill rate would be reluctant to join a district where the rate was high. Thus, grants should be high enough for all districts to benefit.

Cameron considered<sup>45</sup> that the salary grant system introduced by the Tolmie government in 1933, which still represented 75 per cent of the government's expenditures on education, was "sound" in principle. (See Chapter II.) However, he criticized<sup>46</sup> details of the scheme: although the minimum had "some relation to existing conditions" in 1933, they were now "very far below the salaries actually paid"; there were no experience increments; the grants took "no account of unavoidable expenditures" other than teachers' salaries; and the pupil-teacher ratio was too high. Cameron recommended a "basic programme" to be paid for by a provincial grant and a local tax of five mills on land and improvements. Included<sup>47</sup> in the program were







salary scales based upon those "at present in use," an allowance for "posts of special responsibility," a bonus for teachers in "especially remote schools," and an allowance for current expenditures other than teachers' salaries, transportation, and debt charges. Minimum and maximum grants were to be abolished and class sizes reduced.<sup>48</sup> Cameron also recommended<sup>49</sup> that the government pay one half of the pupil-transportation costs and of "approved expenditures on buildings and fundamental new equipment."

Cameron estimated the cost of the basic program as \$8,000,000, and the total cost of education as almost twice that amount, of which the government would pay<sup>50</sup> 55 per cent. Cameron gave<sup>51</sup> several reasons for recommending that the government not pay the entire cost. First, as previously explained, he thought that local control required a degree of local support. Second, provincial revenues were "not sufficient." Transferring all costs to the government would "gobble up" the provincial surplus, and as the government would soon face "large added expenditures," it would be forced to levy taxes "probably quite as objectionable" as the property tax. Third, there were good reasons for not eliminating the property tax.

Cameron devoted<sup>52</sup> a chapter to the "highly contentious matter" of property taxation and assessment. He concluded<sup>53</sup> that property taxes should be reduced because they were regressive and rigid and because they caused







inequalities of opportunity. However, "some reliance on this source" of money was justified by the "financial benefit to property that the school system confers."<sup>54</sup> Cameron agreed with King that the government should appoint an agency to equalize property taxation throughout the province and that the personal property tax be discontinued.

### 3. The Implementation of the Cameron Report

Upon receiving the report late in 1945, the Coalition government made<sup>55</sup> it a part of its election manifesto. The government was returned to office in October, and George Weir, one of the successful candidates, again became Minister of Education. A "checking committee" consisting of Inspectors T. G. Carter and William Plenderleith was established<sup>56</sup> to draft amendments to the Public Schools Act and to make suggestions for the guidance of inspectors.

Amendments passed<sup>57</sup> at the 1946 session of the legislature brought far-reaching changes to the administration of education. Many familiar terms were dropped from the Public Schools Act: city municipality school district, high school area, united school district, educational administrative area, advisory committee, and director of education. The Council of Public Instruction was empowered<sup>58</sup> to create "large municipal school districts" and "large rural school districts." Trustees in rural districts were to be elected<sup>59</sup> either by ballot or by "representatives" who had







been chosen at annual school meetings. The government was to pay<sup>60</sup> the cost of a basic program less the proceeds of a local tax of five mills. The basic program was to include "standard basic salaries authorized by the Council of Public Instruction," and the other allowances recommended by Cameron. In addition, the government was to pay<sup>61</sup> 50 per cent of the "approved costs" of new sites and buildings. Class sizes were reduced<sup>62</sup> in accordance with Cameron's recommendation. A commission was provided<sup>63</sup> "to inquire into and report on the assessed value of land and improvements . . . and to recommend such ways and means as are deemed equitable for the establishment of an equalized assessment."

On April 1 the province was divided<sup>64</sup> into the seventy-four districts that Cameron recommended. Director S. Graham of the Peace River Educational Administrative Area said<sup>65</sup> that the greatest change in his area would be "in the field of administration." He continued: "I believe that the necessary changes can, and will, be brought about more quickly through the fact that from today [May 4] on, the people of the Peace River will be directly responsible for their schools." However, A. S. Towell, Director of the M.S.A. Area, was disappointed to see the end of centralized control. He told<sup>66</sup> a meeting at Mission:

It is a fact that the Cameron proposal is regretted in the M.S.A. Area as it does away with the Director or Official







Trustee. For every person who has said he welcomes the return of a school board, at least thirty have said no—they remember when they had school boards.

At a meeting on April 26, A. S. Towell, the last Director of the M.S.A. Educational Administrative Area, surrendered<sup>67</sup> his gavel to J. P. Carr, the first school board chairman of the Abbotsford-Mission School District.







## NOTES

1. Medians for 1944 were obtained from M. A. Cameron, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945), 24, 34. Cited hereafter as Cameron, Report of Commission. Medians for cities and district municipalities in 1934 were computed from individual rates given in British Columbia, Department of Municipal Affairs, Report of the Deputy Minister (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), J8, J9. The medians for rural districts in 1934 were obtained from H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia (Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), 138.
2. The Report of Public Schools gives the number of school districts in 1944 as six hundred and fifty-four. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1944 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1944), B12. Cited hereafter as Report of Public Schools, with date. Cameron gives the following numbers: cities thirty-three, district municipalities twenty-eight, and rural districts eight hundred and twenty-eight, for a total of eight hundred and eighty-nine. Cameron, Report of Commission, 15, 28. However, if the two hundred and thirty-eight districts not operating schools and not voting money are subtracted, Cameron's estimate is very similar to that in the other source. There is a more serious difference in the sources concerning the number of official trusteeships. The Report of Public Schools says that there were three hundred and eighty-five in 1944, of which two hundred and eighty-one operated schools. Report of Public Schools, 1944, B12. However, Cameron says that there were only two hundred and four. Cameron, Report of Commission, 84.
3. The Vancouver Province, November 25, 1944.
4. Cameron, Report of Commission, 3.
5. The Vancouver Province, November 25, 1944.
6. M. A. Cameron, The Financing of Education in Ontario (Toronto, University of Toronto, Department of Educational Research, 1936).







7. Ibid., 18.
8. Ibid., 19.
9. Ibid., 20.
10. Ibid., 162.
11. Ibid., 163-4.
12. Ibid., 165.
13. The Vancouver Province, October 12, 1944.
14. Cameron, Report of Commission, 3.
15. Ibid., 98-9. The B.C.S.T.A., the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, seventeen school boards, and eighteen municipalities submitted briefs. There were four joint briefs from municipalities and school boards.
16. Ibid., 98; Peace River Block News, March 8, 1945.
17. Ibid.
18. According to the Peace River Block News, he "commented very favorably on the district . . . having a school board." Ibid.
19. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, February 14, 1945.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Report of Commission, 8.
23. Ibid., 37.
24. Ibid., 83.
25. Ibid., 83-4. Cameron's argument is weakened by the fact that the Council of Public Instruction could create an official trusteeship for any reason it chose. Thus Cameron's assumption that they were not being established as a matter of policy is not necessarily true.
26. Ibid., 85.
27. Ibid., 30.







28. Ibid., 32, 34.
29. Ibid., 35.
30. Ibid., 85.
31. Ibid., 38, 85.
32. Ibid., 87.
33. Ibid., 91. The boundaries of Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby, Langley, Delta, and Richmond were not changed. The area of West Vancouver was enlarged but no new schools were added. An additional one-room school was added to Surrey.
34. Ibid., 85.
35. Ibid., 91.
36. It seems curious that Cameron did not consider Creston a large unit. His plan left it unchanged.
37. Ibid., 88-9.
38. Ibid., 88.
39. Ibid., 90-91.
40. Ibid., 89.
41. Ibid., 85-6.
42. Ibid., 95.
43. Ibid., 96.
44. Ibid., 85.
45. Ibid., 56-7.
46. Ibid., 58-63. Other criticisms were that there were minimum and maximum grants, that the system discriminated against districts with secondary schools and districts accepting pupils from other districts, and that assessments were not equalized throughout the province.







47. Ibid., 67, 73-4. The schedule proposed was:

	Elementary	Junior High	High
Minimum	\$1000	\$1200	\$1300
Range	650	810	870
Maximum	1650	2010	2170
Number of increments	9	11	12
Average increments	77.22	73.63	72.50
Size of increments	1 x 50 3 x 100 5 x 60	1 x 50 4 x 100 6 x 60	1 x 50 4 x 100 7 x 60

The minimum certification was: second-class for elementary, Academic B for junior high, and Academic A for high. Ibid., 72. The allowance for current expenditures was a per pupil grant of thirteen, seventeen, and twenty dollars in elementary, junior high, and high schools respectively.

48. Ibid., 82. The "small first step in a programme for the reduction of class size" was that in elementary schools there should be one teacher for twenty-five pupils, two teachers for twenty-six to seventy-five pupils, three teachers for seventy-six to one hundred and twenty pupils, and one for each forty pupils or fraction thereof over one hundred and twenty pupils.

49. Ibid., 82.

50. Ibid., 52, 80. Cameron estimated the government's share of the expenditure to be:

Government administration	\$ 800,000
Pension payments	575,000
Basic grants	5,585,000
Special grants (including transportation)	200,000
Special aid	10,000
Night schools	10,000
Building grants	1,500,000
Total government expenditure	8,680,000

51. Ibid., 44.

52. Ibid., 40-55.

53. Ibid., 40-44.

54. Ibid., 43-4.







55. The Vancouver Province, October 2, 1945.
56. British Columbia, Department of Education, Preliminary Outline of Amendments and Suggestions for the Guidance of School Inspectors (Victoria, King's Printer, 1946).
57. Statutes of British Columbia, C.64 (1946).
58. A large municipal school district could be formed by a union of two or more municipalities, one or more rural districts and one or more municipalities, or a portion of a municipality and one or more municipalities. A large rural district could be formed by a union of two or more rural districts or a portion of a municipality and one or more rural districts. Ibid., s.8.
59. Ibid., s.54,55. Cameron had used the term "delegates" rather than "representatives." Vide supra.
60. Ibid., s.15.
61. Ibid., s.18.
62. Ibid., s.102.
63. Ibid., s.10.
64. Report of Public Schools, 1946, 157-190.
65. Graham made the statement at a meeting on May 4 which elected a temporary school board for the South Peace River School District. Peace River Block News, May 9, 1946.
66. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, March 20, 1946.
67. Ibid., May 1, 1946.







## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

The scheme for large units introduced in British Columbia in the Thirties was successful in several respects. The two experimental units operated for over a decade, in 1946 the entire province was reorganized on the basis of a modified form of large unit, and ultimately most of Canada adopted the principle. However, in view of the stated expectations of George Weir and H. B. King, one may well ask why reorganization did not come earlier and why the principle of centralized control was at least temporarily abandoned.

#### 1. An Assessment of the Large Unit before the Cameron Report

Most of the briefs submitted to the Commission on School Finance in 1934, as well as the report of the revision committee and the technical advisor, endorsed the large unit. The government established two large units and passed legislation making the establishment of other units possible.

#### The School Finance Commission

The briefs submitted showed that there was great support for and no organized opposition to the large unit. The revision committee publicized this support and revealed the need







for reorganization; its effect was limited, however, because the technical advisor's recommendations differed significantly from its own. (See Chapter III.)

The major recommendations of H. B. King, the technical advisor, were not followed, and his report did not appear to influence Maxwell Cameron significantly ten years later. The similarities in the two reports are<sup>1</sup> their recommendations for large units, increased government expenditure, and equalized assessments. They differed in their recommendations concerning the control of education, the size of large units, and the degree of government support. The extent of King's failure may be gauged from the fact that when he retired as chief inspector in 1946, Superintendent F. T. Fairey's tribute ignored<sup>2</sup> the King Report and implied that King had joined the Department of Education to help revise the curriculum. The only achievements of the King Report were the firm establishment of the two "experimental" units and the passage of the ineffectual 1936 legislation.

### The Two Large Units

The Peace River and M.S.A. Districts proved that large units were feasible in two widely divergent areas of British Columbia. They were more economical and efficient than the small districts they replaced, and much of the publicity concerning them was favorable. Thus their formation probably contributed to the government's decision ten years later to







reorganize school districts throughout the province. However, the two pilot projects were unsuccessful in several respects. As they did not match economies with educational advances, the B.C.T.F. showed less enthusiasm for large units in the early Forties than it had done in the early Thirties. (See Chapters II and VI.) For a time, public opposition in the Peace River was so great that George Weir, the Minister of Education, feared the political consequences. The ratepayers of Matsqui voted decisively against the large unit in 1939. The government did not create any more large units until 1946 and then placed them under local rather than central control.

### The 1936 Legislation

The amendments to the Public Schools Act in 1936 providing for the organization of large units were invoked only in the Peace River and the M.S.A. Districts.

#### 2. The Government's Reluctance to Act

Harold Campbell suggests<sup>3</sup> that governments rarely implement relatively unfamiliar proposals. The Aberhart Social Credit government, however, reorganized most of Alberta into large units despite the opposition,<sup>4</sup> initially absent in British Columbia, of the trustees' association. A comparison of the Aberhart and Pattullo governments may reveal why one acted and the other did not. Aberhart and







many Social Credit cabinet ministers and M.L.A.'s were teachers.<sup>5</sup> Aberhart was able to make changes because his party owed<sup>6</sup> its success largely to his influence. His government enacted numerous reforms, and at the insistence of several Social Credit members passed<sup>7</sup> some of the most far-reaching legislation in Canada's history. Pattullo's 1933 election platform appeared radical but was heavily dependent upon federal government support. Although a few of his supporters desired reforms, a greater number counselled against and even obstructed<sup>8</sup> them. Weir's health insurance act passed only because of C.C.F. support. Significantly, this act, like the Special Powers Act, was never invoked. Aberhart's government was secure; it had received<sup>9</sup> a strong mandate and faced a small and ineffectual opposition. Pattullo's party had a clear majority but faced a C.C.F. opposition which, though small, was highly articulate. The C.C.F. had won seven seats in its first election and seemed to be gaining support rapidly. In 1934 Bruce Hutchison said<sup>10</sup> that the C.C.F. was "stronger, for the moment at least, than any other party in British Columbia, a fact accepted on every side by realistic politicians." Dorothy Steeves, C.C.F. education critic, emphasized<sup>11</sup> her party's opposition to large units under centralized control.

It seems clear from the previous chapters that most of the opposition to the large unit was actually opposition to centralized control. In April 1935 Pattullo informed the







B.C.T.F. that he was preparing to divide the province into large units. (See Chapter III.) It is possible that disagreement in the cabinet concerning the type of control caused Pattullo to change his mind and to wait four months before releasing the King Report. It is also possible that the 1936 legislation was a compromise: voluntary large units under centralized control instead of compulsory large units under local control. It is certainly hard to believe that the innocuous 1936 legislation was what Weir had envisaged when he had advocated a centralized, efficient educational system. When he spoke<sup>12</sup> to the B.C.T.F. convention, he did not so much as mention the legislation passed one month earlier.

### 3. Weaknesses of the 1936 Legislation

The long, fruitless struggle of the Department of Education for consolidation had shown how reluctant districts were to join with other districts. J. F. K. English's suggestion<sup>13</sup> that districts did not reorganize before 1946 partly because too much reliance was placed upon local initiative is probably correct. It appears that local governing bodies such as the boards of small school districts can rarely be persuaded to surrender their powers to new and larger units, no matter what arguments are presented. This phenomenon was not unique to British Columbia. In Alberta, despite the success of the Turner







Valley and Berry Creek projects, the school divisions were not established until arbitrarily imposed by the Social Credit government after 1935, and after years of strong opposition at the local level. Similar difficulties in Manitoba caused J. Bergen to conclude<sup>14</sup> that large units have not been formed without an element of compulsion.

The 1936 legislation also required that after the formation of large districts control would devolve to the provincial government. English was again correct when he suggested<sup>15</sup> that districts were afraid to reorganize because they would then have lost local control.

Furthermore, an "educational administrative area" could be formed only if the government first appointed an official trustee. Thus if the government named a district or group of districts, an educational administrative area, the ratepayers, by voting against it, could not only reject the plan but also register disapproval with the government's action in naming an official trustee. When the government placed<sup>16</sup> Langley District Municipality under an official trustee in 1940, it is not surprising that it did not call the district an educational administrative area. Presumably, the only way that a region could become an educational administrative area was to petition the government to appoint an official trustee. The few districts such as those in the Creston and Nanaimo regions which decided to unite between 1936 and 1946 did so under







earlier legislation.

#### 4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the First Large Units

The government's assumption of control in the Peace River resulted in deep resentment. Although the 1937 vote indicates that the ratepayers became convinced that the large unit was preferable to small units, there is no evidence that they ever approved of centralized control. In Matsqui, Sumas, and Abbotsford, centralized control was welcomed. Even J. P. Carr, who had earlier stood almost alone in opposition, soon became<sup>17</sup> a strong supporter of the pilot project. Like the other members of the Advisory Board, however, he wanted<sup>18</sup> changes: financial control by the Board, annual elections, and a single taxation area. The Matsqui ratepayers opposed the large unit in 1939 because of dissatisfaction with its financing. (See Chapter VII.) What they were saying, in effect, was that no matter how good an administrative plan was, it could not succeed if it was inadequately financed. As English said,<sup>19</sup> the pilot projects provided no solution for financial problems.

#### 5. The Long Delay in Reorganizing School Finance

The large units organized in the Thirties differed from King's proposed units in that they were not financed







entirely by the government. For the government to assume complete financial responsibility or even to increase grants substantially, additional sources of revenue were needed. The revision committee, like the Putnam-Weir and Harper Commissions, recommended an income tax. Although King confused matters by preferring a sales tax to an income tax and by anticipating serious difficulties in imposing either, the government was no more ready to impose an income tax in 1936 than it had been in 1925 and 1934. It was easier to increase grants in the Forties, when a large surplus made the securing of additional revenue unnecessary.

King wanted to abolish school boards mainly because he considered them unnecessary under centralized financing. Although he believed boards to be less efficient than the government, his extreme criticisms of boards were limited to those of small districts. He considered it axiomatic that there be boards under a "less centralized system of financing." Under his scheme the tax rate was to remain constant at three to four mills. The apparent promise that the Matsqui, Sumas, and Abbotsford rates would be "frozen" for three years, even if it had been kept, would have provided only a pale shadow of King's proposal. Failing new sources of revenue, when costs rose, the government counselled retrenchment, resulting in Plenderleith's disastrous 1937 reorganization.







Weir was forced to abandon the scheme of centralized control or to adopt a position inconsistent with his principles. Choosing the latter course, he argued that the government must control its contributions but did not concede that the local districts had a similar right concerning their contributions. The large units could hardly have been expected to consider their land taxes as any less local than those of neighboring districts collected by the same agents.

There was ample precedent in British Columbia for centralized financing and local control, but none for shared financing and centralized control. Thus Carr argued that the government was entitled to full control only if it paid all school costs, and various Peace River ratepayers cried, "Taxation without representation."

#### 6. An Unwillingness to Compromise

King's failure to compromise with the revision committee resulted in conflicting recommendations concerning large units. Later Weir refused to make concessions to local control in the large units. The adamant position of King and Weir may have been caused partly by a failure to recognize that the demand for local control was based not upon a rational belief but upon the myth of local interest in education. As J. L. Jackson reminded his fellow trustees in 1936, most of them did not hold office







as the result of elections. When elections were held, few people voted. When the electorate of the Peace River were asked to decide the basic question of who should control education, only four hundred and fifty-one, approximately 13 per cent of those eligible, voted.<sup>20</sup> A little earlier, three thousand, four hundred and ninety had voted<sup>21</sup> in the federal election. When the voters of the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford District were asked to make a similar decision, very few voted. As further proof of the irrational basis of the argument for local control, J. P. Carr cited the small vote as a reason for not attaching much importance to the decision to retain centralized control.

King appeared to understand that myths play a part in people's beliefs about education. ". . . The public school system," he said, ". . . has become something more than a religion, for a religion may be a subject of debate—at least a thing which has to be defended." Nevertheless, King did not treat the beliefs of his critics as a religion. Undeterred by his failure to convince the revision committee that local control should be abandoned, he apparently hoped to convince the government through logical arguments and the success of the pilot projects. Actually, the revision committee's recommendation for "some kind of board" was sufficiently vague that King might well have accepted it. Furthermore, complete centralized control soon proved impracticable, and advisory committees soon







gained de facto control of school buildings and grounds.

Weir was equally intransigent. When asked by the B.C.S.T.A. in 1935 for "elected educational committees" in large units, he insisted that the committees be advisory only. "Otherwise," he said, "a difficult situation might develop." (See Chapter III.) Weir's failure to compromise is emphasized by the obvious willingness of local citizens to make concessions. Alwin Holland in the Peace River said that the people would probably be satisfied to control only school buildings and grounds, leaving control of teachers to the government. A similar view was expressed by the M.S.A. Advisory Committee.

Some of the later actions of the government in the M.S.A. Area are difficult to explain: the refusal to permit periodic elections although legislation required them, the breach of the promise that a vote in the large unit would be held in 1939, and the failure to enact amendments after requesting suggested changes. They can be accounted for by a lack of government interest in the project and a desire to avoid publicizing it.

King's proposal for centralized control, logical as it may have been, was foreign to the thinking of most people of British Columbia. Predictably, the school trustees opposed it, and no organization besides the Canadian Manufacturers' Association supported it. Any hope that the B.C.T.F. might champion the plan disappeared







after Plenderleith's attempted reorganization and the government's failure<sup>22</sup> to raise salaries in the Peace River. The King Report made little impression even on the Department of Education. Harold Campbell, provincial inspector in the Twenties, normal school teacher in the Thirties, municipal inspector and then chief inspector in the Forties, and deputy minister of education in the Fifties, said<sup>23</sup> in a recent interview: "I don't recall ever having heard . . . it seriously advanced that we would take it [control] away from local administration." The product of the idealism of two eminent educators, the large units of the Thirties were soon plagued by excessive economy, theoretical inconsistency, governmental indifference, and sometimes smouldering, sometimes violent, opposition. Centralized control ended in 1946, but its memory reminds us that not all educational experiments have been successful.<sup>24</sup> Yet, in spite of the type of thinking which insists that all experiments be successful, or be made to appear successful, or else be forgotten, this writer believes that any experiment from which learning results is successful in the sense that it is worthwhile. Such men as George Weir, H. B. King, William Plenderleith, Philip Sheffield, A. S. Towell, and J. P. Carr departed from well-trodden paths, and although they inevitably made some mistakes, probably British Columbia's educational system and certainly its educational history are richer for their digression.







## 7. Recommendations for Further Study

Although it has been stated in this study that events in Alberta brought the large unit concept to the fore in British Columbia, a study of the bibliography in Plenderleith's dissertation suggests<sup>25</sup> that United States publications also influenced the thinking of government officials. A study of the influence that thought and practice in the United States and other countries had upon the development of the large unit in Canada would be profitable.

It must be emphasized that this study has concerned itself with the Cameron Report only because it is necessary for an understanding of the introductory phase of the large unit in British Columbia. More research on the Cameron Report would be valuable; for example, briefs presented at the public hearings and reactions to the Report between the time of its publication and its implementation.







## NOTES

1. Cameron referred to the King Report three times. In a footnote he referred to King's treatment of the history of centralized financing in British Columbia. M. A. Cameron, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Educational Finance (Victoria, King's Printer, 1945), 8. He pointed out that King and the Harper Commission had recommended an agency for the supervision of property taxation and assessment. Ibid., 47. Finally, he mentioned King's recommendation, which had recently been implemented, that districts with junior high schools should not receive less in grants than they would have received had they not established such schools. Ibid., 61.
2. British Columbia, Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1946 (Victoria, King's Printer, 1946), MM35. "Dr. King was brought to the Department in 1934 by the Honourable G. M. Weir, M.A., D. Paed., Minister of Education, who had decided upon major changes in the school curriculum. Dr. King came as technical adviser to the Minister and undertook the organization of committees set up to revise the Programme of Studies and to co-ordinate their work."
3. Interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970.
4. J. W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province: The Story of Public Education in Alberta (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1967), 386-8; L. J. Wilson, "Perren Baker and the United Farmers of Alberta — Educational Principles and Policies of an Agrarian Government" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1970), 84-6. The control of the B.C.S.T.A. by municipal school boards, many of which were in effect already large units, probably accounts for its initial support of large units. At the 1935 convention thirty-one delegates represented cities, thirty-six, district municipalities, five, consolidated districts, and only thirteen represented rural districts. Reports of the Proceedings of the Thirty-First Convention of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, n.p., n.d., held at Harrison Hot Springs, September 16, 17, 18, 19, 1935, 77.







5. Nine teachers, including Aberhart, were elected to the Alberta Legislature. The A.T.A. Magazine, volume XVI, numbers 1-2, September, October, 1935, 2, 7.
6. C. B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1953), 165.
7. Ibid., 171-8.
8. John Neil Sutherland says that George Pearson and George Weir were the only reformers in Pattullo's cabinet. J. N. Sutherland, "T. D. Pattullo as a Party Leader" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1960), 73. Sutherland also says that the Liberal party was "less interested in reform after the first two or three years." Ibid., 72.
9. Macpherson, 165.
10. The Vancouver Province, February 15, 1934. Sutherland supports Hutchison's conclusion: "Until its provincial convention in July 1936, the C.C.F. had been conceded a strong chance of winning the next election in British Columbia." Sutherland, 86.
11. According to Dorothy Steeves, Weir often told her that a C.C.F. government would have been more authoritarian in school affairs than he was. Interview with Dorothy Steeves, June 9, 1970. It must have distressed Weir to adopt what he had once called a form of state socialism only to find the socialists opposed to it.
12. The Vancouver Province, April 14, 1936. He spoke mainly about health insurance. Concerning control of education, he said: "We are weeding out those occasional, fussy, meddling, ignorant school boards who make it a practice to oppose not only the teacher but the educational system as a whole."
13. J.F.K. English, "An Evaluation of the Reorganized System of Local School Administration in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1956), 28.







14. J. J. Bergen, "School District Reorganization in Rural Manitoba" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 1967), 243-7.
15. English, 28.
16. Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News, September 25, 1940.
17. Ibid., January 25, 1940.
18. Ibid., December 6, 1940.
19. English, 28.
20. It is not known exactly how many people were qualified to vote. Plenderleith said that the "bona fide voters" among the three hundred and eighty-one 1934 petitioners represented "9.5 per cent of the total." Assuming that he considered all those on the voters' list as eligible and that he was referring to the entire Peace River District, there was a total of  $(381-53) \div .095 = 3453$  eligible voters; and those who voted in 1937 represented  $451 \div 3453 = 13$  per cent of the total. If Plenderleith meant the total to mean only those eligible to vote in the 1934 unit, the percentage would of course be considerably smaller.
21. Peace River Block News, June 4, 1937.
22. It would appear from Chapter VII that salaries in the M.S.A. Area were improved after 1939 initially because of public concern at the number of teachers leaving and later because of effective teacher organization.
23. Interview with Harold Campbell, June 16, 1970.
24. Chalmers implies that every government-sponsored educational experiment has been "a success." Chalmers, 91. Not surprisingly, the Department of Education viewed the British Columbia experiment as an unqualified success. See British Columbia Department of Education (The Provincial Advisory Committee to the C.E.A. -- Kellogg Project in Educational Leadership), "School Organization in British Columbia" (mimeographed, Victoria, 1952), 11-26.







25. W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in the Reorganization of a Rural Inspectoral Unit in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto 1936), 235-8. Several of the works mentioned refer to "the county system" or "plan"; for example, W. Cartin, A County Unit Plan for Idaho (Boise, Idaho Educational Association, 1928); L. W. Hacker, The County Unit System Applied to Putnam County (Iowa City, State University of Illinois, 1927); M. E. Hinderks, The County Unit System as it would Apply to Boone County (Boulder, University of Colorado, 1930).







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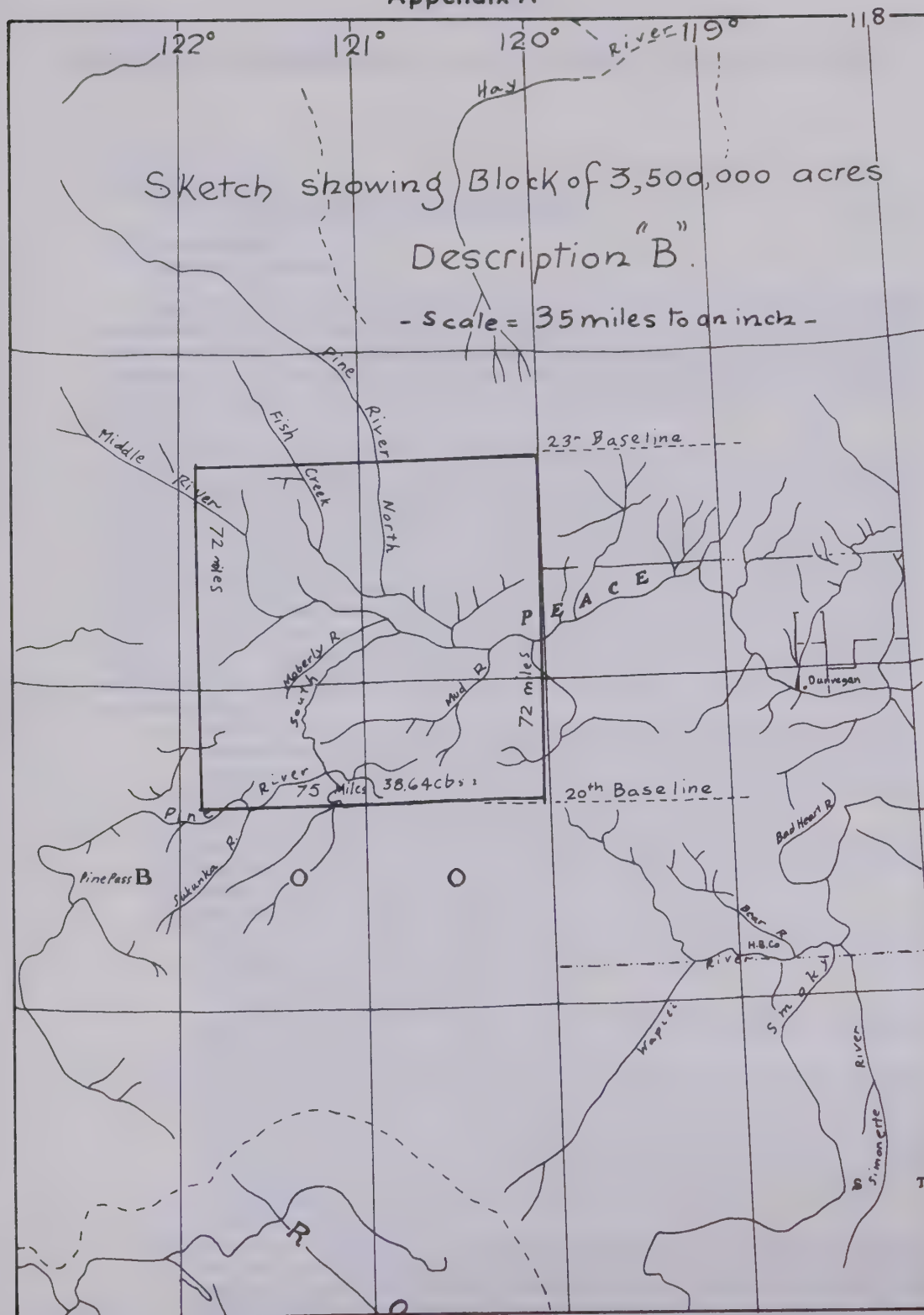
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## Appendix A



Map accompanying Order in Council No. 450, June 26, 1907, showing Peace River Block. Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Lands, Forests, and Water Resources, Victoria, British Columbia.







## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL ACCOMPANYING THE KING REPORT

*The Hon. G. M. Weir,*  
*Provincial Secretary and Minister of Education.*

*The Hon. John Hart,*  
*Minister of Finance.*

SIRS,—I have the honour to submit to you as the members of the British Columbia Commission on School Finance my report and recommendations as Technical Adviser to your Commission. I include also the report of the citizens who constituted the Revision Committee of the large General Committee which was appointed as representative of the general public and of the special bodies in the Province which are interested in education.

My report includes a sketch of the organization of the educational system of the Province, a historical study of school finance in British Columbia, a development of general principles in relation to public education and the financing thereof, a study of educational finance and organization in the English-speaking world, of the general principles of taxation, and statistical studies which are intended to throw light upon the problems with which you have to do. A chapter is included to show how specific administrative reforms may yield at the same time considerable economies in expenditure and better results from the standpoint of education. The report outlines a variety of methods whereby taxation upon real property may be lessened and outlines the administrative reorganization which, in my opinion, is essential alike for educational efficiency and for economy and financial control. The more important of these recommendations are tabulated now:—

- (1.) That the Provincial Government as soon as possible take over the complete financial responsibility for education, with the exception of provision for interest and sinking fund charges for which municipalities are now chargeable.
- (2.) That there be a uniform Provincial tax upon real property of from 3 to 4 mills upon the total assessable value of this property, wherever situate.
- (3.) That the tax upon personal property in non-municipal territory be abolished.
- (4.) That the remaining costs of education be provided from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Province.
- (5.) That further revenue be secured through an increase in the income tax of from 1 to 2 per cent. upon all income now taxable (that is to say, the present exemptions should be continued), or from a general sales tax of 1 per cent., or from a combination of these two imposts.

(A series of calculations is included in the report to show how the schools could be financed by a combination of these lower taxes upon land and additions to the income tax of 1, 1½, and of 2 per cent.)

- (6.) That the system of having the schools administered by a multiplicity of School Boards (826) be abandoned, and that the Province be divided into educational areas approximating the present inspectorial divisions, and that each of these areas be administered by a Director of Education under the Superintendent of Education, and that the latter official's staff be organized to deal with this situation. (The proposed organization is described in a chapter on educational reorganization.)
- (7.) That the reorganization be effected in stages, the first stage being the taking-over at the earliest possible time of the rural school districts in unorganized territory upon a modification of the Peace River plan, these schools to be financed by a uniform tax upon all real property in the unorganized territory, together with contributions, as at present, from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.
- (8.) That the present School Boards in unorganized territory be abolished and be replaced by correspondents or local advisers elected by the local community to effect liaison with the area administration.







## IV.

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

- (9.) That in municipal areas the present School Boards continue to act until the municipal schools shall be absorbed into the larger educational areas, and that when this shall happen a new type of governing body be created to have control of projects locally initiated or of additional contributions made by special local levy, without, however, diminishing the authority of the professional Director of Education of the area.
- (10.) That, for the freeing of the educational administration from irrelevant influences, all appointments in the educational services be made by an Appointments Board of educational officials, and that all new buildings and the like be provided for upon the report of an Interdepartmental Board of permanent officials representing the Department of Education, the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Works, with, perhaps, representation from the Economic Council.
- (11.) That provision be made for the equalization of assessments upon a scientific basis.
- (12.) It is recognized that relief to the municipalities is imperative and should be given at the earliest possible date. The restoration of grants to the municipalities has been frequently asked.

*Instead of making grants for a variety of purposes, it is recommended that all relief to municipalities be given through increased school grants or by taking over an increasing portion of the cost of education until the Government pays the entire cost less the proceeds of a rate of 3 to 4 mills and the interest and sinking fund charges for which municipalities are now chargeable. In this way the municipalities would be relieved as much as they would be if diversified grants were made, and at the same time it would be possible to rationalize the administrative structure of education. The only qualification which the writer would make to this recommendation is that, for purposes of more effective control, the Government may have to take over a greater portion of the cost of such social services as mothers' pensions.*

- (13.) It is recommended that future capital expenditure be made upon the "pay-as-you-go" principle, and that the proceeds of approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mill upon the total taxable real property in the Province be set aside as a building fund for public school purposes (not including such special buildings as Normal School and University buildings). The vital statistics of the Province point to a lessening need for new buildings for elementary schools. Increased attendance at secondary schools is creating need for more accommodation for the secondary schools (junior and senior high schools). Building will also be necessary because of the shifting of population and the obsolescence of buildings now in use. The greatest expenditure will be in Vancouver. Immediately required accommodation will have to be provided by means of a loan, or loans. Thereafter it will be salutary to live within income, adopting the principle of "pay-as-you-go." A rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mill upon all taxable real property would yield a sum in excess of \$350,000 annually. This sum would provide interest and sinking funds for the loans for immediately required construction, and would provide also the annual requirements upon a "pay-as-you-go" basis for subsequent construction. Three hundred thousand dollars can be made to provide accommodation for 2,000 pupils with building costs what they are likely to be during the next few years.

If, however, it is feared that this proposal will bring constant embarrassment to the Government of the day, the local municipality which demands a new building could be required to provide it, aided by a grant from the Government. The "pay-as-you-go" plan would be equally applicable in this case, but the municipality would raise its own fund. It would be an obligation upon the municipality to provide accommodation.

While agreeing with the Revision Committee that recourse should be had to the income tax for further revenue, I do not agree with its recommendation that all incomes







## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

V.

over \$50 per month be taxed 2 per cent. in addition to present imposts, for the reason that this tax would be oppressive upon people of low earnings. I recommend the continuation of present exemptions.

I have to thank the Superintendent of Education, Dr. S. J. Willis; the Assistant Superintendent, Mr. D. L. MacLaurin; the officials of the Provincial Library and of the Department of Finance, for unfailing co-operation; also Mr. H. N. McCorkindale, Superintendent of the Vancouver Schools, and his officials. The discussions of the General Committee and of the Revision Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Harry Charlesworth have been most informative.

The graphs and tables are the work of Miss Muriel MacKay, my Research Assistant, whose help has been invaluable.

I have the honour to be,

Sirs,

Your obedient servant,

H. B. KING,

*Technical Adviser to the British Columbia  
Commission on School Finance.*

*Victoria, B.C., March 22nd, 1935.*

H. B. King, School Finance in British Columbia  
(Victoria, King's Printer, 1935), III-V.







LEGISLATION ENABLING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EDUCATIONAL  
ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS, 1936

## CHAPTER 55.

## An Act to amend the "Public Schools Act."

3. (3.) Said section 12 is further amended by adding thereto as clauses (u) and (v) the following:—

"(u.) In case a person who is appointed an Inspector under section 4 is also appointed an official trustee under this Act to conduct the affairs of any school district, or of any two or more school districts, respectively, to designate the area comprising that school district, or those school districts, as an 'educational administrative area' for the purposes of this Act, and to designate that person as the 'Director of Education' for that area; and to revoke any designation so made: Provided that no school district or school districts shall be designated as an educational administrative area unless at a special meeting or meetings of the qualified voters of such school district or school districts convened by the Superintendent of Education, or some person authorized by him in writing, a majority of such qualified voters within the proposed educational administrative area who are present at the special meeting or respective meetings vote in favour of the formation of such area. Notices of the time and place of such special meetings, specifying the purpose thereof, shall be posted in three or more places in each school district concerned, and shall be advertised in each school district concerned in a newspaper published therein, at least ten days before the holding of the meetings:

"(v.) To designate any Inspector as an 'Assistant Director of Education' for any educational administrative area."







Amends s. 156.

24. Section 156 of said chapter 226 is amended by inserting after the word "any," in the first line of subsection (2), the word "rural"; and by adding to said section as subsections (3) and (4) the following:—

"(3.) In the exercise by an official trustee under this section of any power or function conferred by this Act on a Board of School Trustees or any of its officers, the official trustee may make such deviations in matters of procedure and in the form of any notice or statement prescribed by this Act as are necessary for the more effective exercise by him of that power or function; and the Council of Public Instruction may make such regulations as it considers necessary or expedient for the adapting of the provisions of this Act to the conduct of the affairs of those school districts in respect of which official trustees have been appointed.

"(4.) The official trustee of any school district shall have power to determine what school or schools within the district each pupil shall attend, and an official trustee who is the Director of Education for any educational administrative area designated under this Act shall have power to determine what school or schools within the area each pupil enrolled in any school district comprised in the area shall attend."

Enacts ss. 162C  
and 162D.

Educational Adminis-  
trative Areas  
Appointments  
Board.

25. Said chapter 226 is amended by inserting therein as sections 162C and 162D the following:—

"162C. (1.) There shall be a Board to be known as the 'Educational Administrative Areas Appointments Board,' which shall consist of not fewer than five and not more than seven members







1936

## SCHOOLS, PUBLIC (AMENDMENT).

CHAP. 55

to be appointed by the Council of Public Instruction from the persons serving or employed in the public-school system of education in the Province, including the University of British Columbia, who hold at least the qualifications evidenced by an academic teacher's certificate issued by the Department, all of which members shall hold office during pleasure.

"(2.) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this Act, the Board shall have exclusive power to make all appointments, promotions, dismissals, and transfers of teachers employed in the school districts comprised in each educational administrative area designated under this Act; except that promotions within any educational administrative area, other than promotions to the principalships of superior, junior high, or high schools of four or more divisions or of elementary schools of eight or more divisions, may be made by the Director of Education for that area. The Board shall in the exercise of its powers be subject to regulations approved by the Council of Public Instruction. <sup>Powers of Board.</sup>

"(3.) No member of the Board shall receive any remuneration for his services; but the members shall be paid the amount of the travelling and other personal expenses necessarily incurred by them in the discharge of their official duties. The expenses so incurred from time to time shall be apportioned by the Board among the school districts comprised in the several educational administrative areas in proportion to the services rendered by the Board to the respective school districts, and the amount apportioned to each school district shall be paid by the official trustee of the district as part of the ordinary expenses of the district. <sup>Remuneration of members.</sup>

"162D. In an educational administrative area a school committee of five persons and in a school district forming part only of such an area a school committee of three persons may be elected annually by the qualified voters of the area or school district at special school meetings called for the purpose by the Director of Education for the area, or some person authorized by him in writing; and the Director, in his discretion, may appoint one or more additional persons as members of such school committees. The respective school committees so elected and appointed may advise the Director from time to time on matters pertaining to the operation, maintenance, and general welfare of the schools of the area or school district." <sup>School committee.</sup>

British Columbia, Statutes of British Columbia,  
c.55, s.3, 24, 25 (1936).







APPENDIX D  
ORIGINAL PEACE RIVER SCHOOLS



Devereaux School, from a photograph taken in 1935.









Willow Valley School,  
from a photograph taken in 1970.



North Pine School,  
from a photograph taken in 1970.







## APPENDIX E

PETITION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
FROM A GROUP OF PEACE RIVER CITIZENS, 1934

1. WHEREAS there has recently been put into effect in the Peace River District of British Columbia a drastic innovation in the administration of the Public Schools of the District whereby the local control of said schools has been arbitrarily taken from the School Boards elected by the ratepayers at their Annual Meetings and placed in the hands of an Official Trustee,
2. AND WHEREAS the ratepayers of the district were not in any case consulted as to the advisability of this innovation which was, as a matter of fact, carried out secretly, with a minimum of publicity, with actions that can only be called despotic and coercive,
3. AND WHEREAS it has long been considered the proud and inherent right of British peoples to control their local affairs such as are exemplified in the Municipal and Public School Systems, and has long been the boast of British peoples everywhere that where taxes are collected there must the people have a right of voice as to which and how such taxes shall be spent,







4.     AND     WHEREAS the rights of the ratepayers in the district in the spending of the tax money raised by themselves have been invaded and their privileges, as instanced in the choice of teachers to instruct their children have been annulled,
5.     AND     WHEREAS this whole innovation is scandalously un-British in character and utterly undemocratic in principle and smacks of Nazi or Fascist Dictatorship,
6.     AND     WHEREAS the claims of the exponents of this innovation that it will decrease the cost of Public Schools in this district and make for greater efficiency of teachers and the consequent increased efficiency of the schools, is entirely a matter of opinion and can as readily be disputed and refuted as proven, and depends as a matter of fact entirely upon the administrative ability and unbiased and unprejudiced attitude of one man — the Official Trustee — towards not only all the schools of the district but also towards all the teachers now in the district or who may in the future come or want to come to the district,
7.     AND     WHEREAS all history and precedent shows us that such autocratic power in the hands of one person







has never been, in the long run, in the best interests of the people as a whole and teaches us that the administration of the people's affairs by the chosen representatives of the people or the people themselves, has been the British way and has proven by far the most satisfactory,

8. NOW THEREFORE, we the undersigned ratepayers of the Peace River District of British Columbia hereby express our strong and unalterable disapproval of this experiment in the administration of the Public Schools of British Columbia and demand the Public Schools of the District be restored to the elected school boards of the people.

W. A. Plenderleith, "An Experiment in the Reorganization and Administration of a Rural Inspectoral Unit in British Columbia" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1937), Appendix, 35-36.







## APPENDIX F

FORM-LETTER FROM WILLIAM PLENDERLEITH TO SECRETARIES OF  
PEACE RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICTS DISSOLVED IN OCTOBER, 1935THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIADEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
VICTORIAPouce Coupe, B. C.,  
October 22, 1935.

Mr. J. A. Powell,  
Secretary, Charlie Lake School Bd.,  
Charlie Lake, B. C.

Dear Mr. Powell:

The Council of Public Instruction has decided that the children of your school district will be able to obtain many additional benefits (such as dental and health services, increased library, classroom equipment, etc.) which your district as constituted at present cannot possibly afford to provide.

An Order-in-Council has therefore been approved abolishing the former boundaries of your school district and including your school district in the larger consolidated unit known as the Peace River Rural School District.

Experience has proven that schools in the larger units of administration can, with the co-operation of the ratepayers, be administered much more economically and effectively than individual schools under the small unit system.

The Department of Education, appreciating the excellent work that your Board has been carrying out in the past and realizing that it is absolutely essential for the success of the system to retain the local interests and local expression of opinion in school matters, is requesting the present trustees to act as an Advisory Committee to keep the Official Trustee conversant with the wishes of the ratepayers regarding the administration of your school.

Under the new system your Advisory Committee takes charge of the buildings, grounds and general school equipment and makes any recommendations to the Official Trustee that will lead to an increase in efficiency in the administration of your school.







The Official Trustee will be responsible for the business administration of the school. Former secretaries (now called correspondents) are therefore requested to submit all accounts, records, minute books, bank cheque book, bank pass book, outstanding bills, contracts, etc. in connection with their schools to the Official Trustee by return mail. It would also facilitate the work of settlement if each secretary would compile a list of all outstanding accounts and submit the list when sending in the rest of the school records.

I would also like you as secretary to advise me by return mail regarding the following points:

1. The amount set by the district for the teacher's salary for the current year. **780**
2. The portion of the above amount of salary payable by the district. **80<sup>00</sup>**
3. The name of the janitor. **Harvey Southwicks**
4. The janitor's monthly salary. **\$4.00**

As it is necessary to issue all cheques in payment of all approved school accounts from this office, I am today notifying the Manager of the Bank of Commerce of my appointment as Official Trustee of your school and asking him to transfer any balance from your individual school account into the general Official Trustee account. For the above reason no cheque should be issued by you after receipt of this letter.

You are requested to retain all stamps and stationery that you have on hand. These supplies are to be used by you in your correspondence relating to school matters with this office. In this connection may I suggest that any routine correspondence can be forwarded in one envelope at the end of each month with the teacher's report as we are endeavouring to eliminate any unnecessary expense.

In closing I personally wish to take this opportunity to assure you that while I will be taking over your school as Official Trustee, I would also much appreciate having you act as correspondent for the district. I feel that if you and the members of your Board co-operate with me, we shall be able to provide services and equipment for the children of your district that will do much to raise the status of education in the Peace River Inspectorate.

Thanking you in anticipation of your co-operation and trusting that the progressive spirit that has characterized your district in the past will be continued in the future, I am,

Yours very truly,



Official Trustee.

WAP\*EMM

N.B. A copy of this letter is being forwarded to the teacher.







## APPENDIX G

1936 ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT (AMENDMENT). CHAP. 1



## CHAPTER 1.

An Act to amend the "Abbotsford School District Act." 1921 (2nd Sess.),  
c. 1; 1928, c. 1.

[Assented to 1st April, 1936.]

HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia, enacts as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as the "Abbotsford School District Act Amendment Act, 1936." Short title.

2. Section 2 of the "Abbotsford School District Act," being chapter 1 of the Statutes of British Columbia, 1921 (2nd Session), is repealed, and the following is substituted therefor:— Re-enacts s. 2.

"2. The boundaries of the Abbotsford School District are hereby redefined as follows:—

"All that certain parcel or tract of land situate in Group 2, New Westminster District, which comprises the respective areas within the limits of the following:—

- "(a.) The Corporation of the District of Sumas:
- "(b.) The Corporation of the District of Matsqui:
- "(c.) The Corporation of the Village of Abbotsford:
- "(d.) The South-west Quarter of Section 2, Township 16, being the Townsite of Huntingdon; and
- "(e.) That portion of Township 20 lying south of the Fraser River which is not within the limits of The Corporation of the District of Sumas, The Corporation of the District of Matsqui, or The Corporation of the Township of Chilliwack;

and the District Municipality School Districts of Sumas and Matsqui are hereby respectively abolished."

3. The person at present holding office as Official Trustee of Abbotsford School District shall continue in office as Official. Re-enacts s. 3.







## CHAP. 1 ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT (AMENDMENT). 1 ED. 8

Trustee of the district as constituted by this Act until his period of office is terminated by the Council of Public Instruction, and until either another person is appointed as Official Trustee of the district by said Council or a Board of School Trustees is elected in accordance with the provisions of the "Public Schools Act." Section 84 of the "Public Schools Act" shall apply in respect of the trustees so elected in like manner as if the school meeting at which they are elected were the first annual school meeting of the district. Upon the election of a Board of School Trustees the Official Trustee for the district shall cease to hold office; and thereupon the following sections of this Act shall apply, with the substitution of the words "Board of School Trustees" for the words "Official Trustee" when used in those sections.

Re-enacts ss. 4 and 5.

4. Sections 4 and 5 of said chapter 1 are repealed, and the following are substituted therefor:—

"4. (1.) For the year 1936, the area which, prior to the coming into force of this section, was within the District Municipality School District of Sumas shall be assessed and taxed in the amount of ten thousand nine hundred and twenty-six dollars and eight cents, and this amount shall be paid by the Municipal Council of The Corporation of the District of Sumas to the Official Trustee in instalments as required by him for repayment of amounts advanced to him by the Minister of Finance in accordance with the provisions of this section.

"(2.) For the year 1936, the area which, prior to the coming into effect of this section, was within the District Municipality School District of Matsqui shall be assessed and taxed in the amount of sixteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-one dollars, and this amount shall be paid by the Municipal Council of The Corporation of the District of Matsqui to the Official Trustee in instalments as required by him for repayment of amounts advanced to him by the Minister of Finance in accordance with the provisions of this section.

"(3.) Upon the order of the Superintendent of Education, the Minister of Finance may in his discretion advance to the Official Trustee out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund such sums as may be required from time to time to provide for the successful operation and maintenance of the schools in the Abbotsford School District during the year 1936.

"5. (1.) On or before the first day of January in each year beginning with 1937, the Official Trustee of the Abbotsford School District shall prepare detailed estimates of the sums required in addition to the aid granted by the Province under the 'Public Schools Act' to meet the ordinary and extraordinary expenses of the Abbotsford School District for the year. The total of these estimates when approved by the Council of Public Instruction







## 1936      ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT (AMENDMENT). CHAP. 1

shall be the amount to be levied as school taxes in the district for the year.

“(2.) The Official Trustee shall at the same time prepare a statement showing what proportion of the total enrolment of pupils in the schools of the district in October of the last preceding year consists of pupils resident within the limits of each of the following areas:—

“(a.) The Corporation of the District of Sumas:

“(b.) The Corporation of the District of Matsqui:

“(c.) The part of the Abbotsford School District not within the limits of The Corporation of the District of Sumas or The Corporation of the District of Matsqui.

“(3.) The Official Trustee shall determine, on the basis of the proportionate number of pupils resident in each of the three areas, as shown by the statement prepared pursuant to subsection (2), what portion of the total amount required for school purposes in the district for the year shall be raised by taxation for school purposes within The Corporation of the District of Sumas and The Corporation of the District of Matsqui, respectively, and shall thereupon notify each of the Municipal Councils of those Corporations accordingly, stating the amount of the respective portion so determined. Each of the said Municipal Councils shall pay to the Official Trustee on demand, on or before the thirtieth day of October in that year, sixty-five per centum of the amount of its respective portion set out in the notice, and the remaining thirty-five per centum thereof in full before the end of that year. The Official Trustee shall in like manner determine the amount to be raised by taxation for school purposes within the area set out in clause (c) of subsection (2), and shall notify the Provincial Assessor of the amount; which amount shall be apportioned, assessed, levied, and collected in that area in all respects as if it were an amount voted by the qualified voters at an annual school meeting to be raised by assessment in a rural school district comprising that area.

“(4.) In each year beginning with 1937, upon the order of the Superintendent of Education, the Minister of Finance shall pay to the Official Trustee the amount required for school purposes in the district, as determined by the Official Trustee with the approval of the Council of Public Instruction, in ten equal monthly instalments on the twentieth day of each month of the year except July and August; and all payments authorized by this subsection shall be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and all taxes and moneys assessed and collected in respect of the area set out in clause (c) of subsection (2), as well as all moneys received by the Official Trustee from the respective Municipal Councils pursuant to subsection (3), shall be paid forthwith into







## CHAP. 1 ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT (AMENDMENT). 1 ED. 8

the Consolidated Revenue Fund in repayment of the moneys paid by the Minister of Finance to the Official Trustee pursuant to this subsection.

“(5.) The order of the Superintendent of Education referred to in subsection (4) shall show the portion of the total amount apportioned under subsection (3) to each of the areas set out in subsection (2).”

Repeals s. 6.

5. Section 6 of said chapter 1 is repealed.

Amends s. 7.

6. Section 7 of said chapter 1 is amended by striking out the word “extended” in the first line, and substituting therefor the word “redefined.”

Repeals s. 9.

7. Section 9 of said chapter 1 is repealed.

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VICTORIA, B.C. :

Printed by CHARLES F. BANFIELD, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty.  
1936.

British Columbia, Statutes of British Columbia,  
c.1 (1936).



























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